To this End, he declares himſelf ſenſible of God's Being and his Providence: He profeſſes to believe, that this Great and Good Being is at all Times, and upon all Occaſions; Every-Where, and in all Places, intimately and immediately preſent with him: That He knoweth all his Thoughts, and is privy to all his moſt ſecret Deſigns. And therefore, as he did thus firmly believe, that God exerciſed a continual Providence over the Affairs of this World; and regularly and conſtantly guided and directed the whole Courſe of them; and was inwardly perſuaded, that all the Iſſues and Events of Things muſt therefore of Neceſſity be at all Times in God's Hands, and at his Diſpoſal: The Pſalmiſt does very juſtly conclude, That it muſt needs be the moſt deſperate Folly and Madneſs imaginable, for him to engage in ſuch a ſilly and wicked Undertaking as That which his Enemies charged him with; Namely, That of conſpiring againſt the Lord's Anointed. Becauſe, This were in Effect, to plot againſt Infinite Wiſdom, to counteract and reſiſt Almighty Power, to oppoſe and ſtruggle againſt the Counſels of Heaven, and to ſtrive and fight with God himſelf. SERM. XI.

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Therefore it is he ſays, in the Beginning of this Pſalm, *O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me out, and known me: Thou knoweſt my down-ſitting, and mine up-riſing; thou underſtandeſt my Thoughts long before. Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed: And ſpieſt out all my Ways. For, lo, there is not a Word in my Tongue, but thou, O Lord, knoweſt it altogether. Thou haſt faſhioned me behind and before: And laid thine Hand upon me.*

As if he had ſaid, Were I wicked enough to form ſuch a Deſign as That which my Enemies lay to my Charge: Were it never ſo artfully concealed from the Knowledge of the World; and never ſo well concerted, and deeply laid; yet were it the utmoſt Extremity of Folly, to think of hiding it from Thee, or of putting it in Execution without thy Permiſſion. Becauſe, unto Thee all Hearts be open, all Deſires known, and from Thee no Secrets can be hid. Thou diſcerneſt the firſt Motions, the moſt hidden Thoughts, and ſecret Deſigns of my Heart: Thou compaſſeſt me in on every Side, and art preſent with me at all Times, and in all Places: Inſomuch, that I cannot conceive a ſingle Thought, nor ſo much as take any one Step, without thy Knowledge, and thy Permiſſion.

Permiſſion. For, *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit? Or, whither ſhall I go from thy Preſence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there: If I go down to Hell, thou art there alſo. If I take the Wings of the Morning: And remain in the utterməſt Parts of the Sea; Even there alſo ſhall thy Hand lead me: And thy right Hand ſhall hold me. If I ſay, Peradventure the Darkneſs ſhall cover me: Then ſhall my Night be turned to Day. Yea, the Darkneſs is no Darkneſs with thee, but the Night is as clear as the Day. The Darkneſs and Light to thee are both alike.* SREM. XI.

Thus ſenſible of God's Being and his Providence, of his Omnipreſence and Omniſcience; and at the ſame Time conſcious of his own Innocence; *David* commits his Cauſe unto God: And in an humble Confidence, and firm Perſuaſion of the Divine Juſtice and Goodneſs, he comforts himſelf with this Reflexion; That God, who knew his Heart, and ſaw his Innocence; would, in the End, clear his Character, and avenge him of his Adverſaries. Full of this Confidence, he ſays; *Wilt thou not ſlay the Wicked, O God?* And then he aſſigns the Grounds of this Confidence, by making this ſhort but ſolemn Appeal unto God for his Innocence

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of the Fact, which his Enemies unjuſtly charged him with. *Try me, O God, and ſeek the Ground of my Heart: Prove me, and examine my Thoughts. Look well, if there be any Way of Wickedneſs in me: And lead me in the Way everlaſting.*

Now as the Belief and Perſuaſion of God's being intimately preſent with us, and of his knowing all Things, is a Thing of ſuch Importance to us: Both as it helps to regulate our Behaviour; and to ſupport us under all the Circumſtances of Temptation and Affliction, I ſhall in my enſuing Diſcourſe endeavour to ſhew,

I.

The Omnipreſence of God: Or, That God is preſent Every-Where.

II.

That From his being thus preſent Every-Where, His Omniſcience will naturally follow: And he muſt in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee, and know every Thing that paſſes.

And

III.

I ſhall ſhew what Influence the Belief of theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

I.

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I.

I am to ſhew, The Omnipreſence of God: Or, That God is preſent Every-Where. This will appear,

1. Firſt from the Conſideration of God's Nature.

2. And Secondly From the Works of Creation and Providence.

1. And Firſt the Nature of God evidently requires, that he ſhould be preſent Every-Where.

The Firſt and beſt Argument which Reaſon affords us for the Being of a God, is the abſolute Neceſſity of ſome Firſt Cauſe; which is Self-Exiſtent, and therefore Independent and Eternal. * It is abſolutely neceſſary that there ſhould be ſome ſuch Self-Exiſtent, Eternal and All-Sufficient Being: Or elſe, *the Things which are made*, could never have been made at all: Becauſe it is impoſſible

* As a learned Author argues, 'It is abſolutely and undeniably certain, that *Something has exiſted from all Eternity*. —For ſince Something now Is, 'tis evident that Something always WAS; Otherwiſe the Things that NOW ARE, muſt have been produced out of Nothing, abſolutely and without Cauſe: Which is a plain Contradiction in Terms. For, to ſay a Thing is *produced*, and yet that there is no *Cauſe* at all of that Production, is to ſay that Something is *Effected*, when it is *Effected by Nothing*; that is, at the ſame Time when it is *not Effected at all*.' *Clarke's* Demonſtration of the Being and Attributes of God. Prop. 1. Ninth Edition.

SERM. XI. that any Thing ſhould make itſelf. For to ſuppoſe that any Thing can make itſelf; is to ſuppoſe That Thing to BE, and NOT to BE at the ſame Time: It is to ſuppoſe it capable of acting, before it has any actual BEING, and able to do SOMETHING before it is actually able to do ANY THING: Which is downright Nonſenſe and Contradiction. For NOTHING has no Properties, and no Powers: And That which has no Properties, and no Powers, can do NOTHING; and conſequently, NOTHING can poſſibly make itſelf.

Theſe Reflections therefore will naturally lead us to the Belief and Acknowledgment of a Firſt Cauſe: And this Firſt Cauſe is That awful and adorable Being, which we in our Language call GOD.

God then is a Being that does exiſt neceſſarily, and of himſelf: He has exiſted from all Eternity, independently, and by the Neceſſity of his own Nature: And he muſt and will continue to exiſt to all Eternity, by Reaſon of the ſame Neceſſity of his Nature.

Here then we muſt take our Riſe: Here we muſt ground our preſent Argument for the Divine Immenſity, or the Omnipreſence of God; Namely, upon the Neceſſity of his

his Exiſtence. For if it be neceſſary, that there ſhould be a Firſt Cauſe; it is equally neceſſary, that this Firſt Cauſe ſhould be Every-Where. As the Firſt Cauſe is by the Neceſſity of his Nature Self-Exiſtent and Independent; even ſo muſt all other Things, which do actually exiſt, be neceſſarily dependent upon him. And for this Reaſon, there cannot be any Beings, nor any Places, which are out of his Reach, or exempt from This Dependence: BecauſeHe is the Firſt and Great Cauſe of all: Whatever Is, owes its Being and Exiſtence to him; and muſt therefore neceſſarily be dependent upon him: And whatever is in its own Nature neceſſarily dependent upon him, He muſt neceſſarily be preſent to: And for this Reaſon the Firſt Cauſe muſt of Neceſſity be actually preſent Every-Where; in all Places, and with all Things: Becauſe, He upholdeth and ſupporteth all Things, *and by Him all Things conſiſt*. Col. i. 17. And therefore, to ſuppoſe that there can be any Places, where God is not preſent, or any Things or Beings, to and with which He is not preſent; is plainly to ſuppoſe a manifeſt Abſurdity and Contradiction: Becauſe it ſuppoſes them independent of That Firſt and Great Cauſe of all, to whom they owe SERM. XI.

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owe their Being and Exiſtence; and without whoſe Preſence and Power they could not poſſibly BE, or exiſt at all.

Since then it is abſolutely neceſſary, That there ſhould be ſome Firſt Cauſe, from whom all Things derive their Being and Exiſtence; it is likewiſe equally neceſſary, that This Firſt Cauſe ſhould be actually preſent Every-Where. This follows from the Nature of a Firſt Cauſe; which is Neceſſarily-Exiſtent, or Self-Exiſtent; Independent, and therefore Infinite or Omnipreſent. As God has exiſted from all Eternity, by the Neceſſity of his own Nature, He muſt likewiſe neceſſarily exiſt Every-where; or be preſent Every-Where, and in all Places. For, as a learned Author expreſſes it, * 'The Idea of 'Infinity or Immenſity — is ſo cloſely con-'nected with That of Self-Exiſtence, that 'becauſe 'tis impoſſible but Something muſt 'be Infinite, *independently and of itſelf*, 'therefore it muſt of Neceſſity be Self-'Exiſtent: And becauſe Something muſt 'of Neceſſity be Self-Exiſtent, therefore 'tis 'neceſſary that it muſt likewiſe be Infinite.' The Reaſon which our Author gives for this Aſſertion is, That the Neceſſity of Nature whereby God has always exiſted, being a 'Neceſſity

* Idem Ibidem. Prop. 6.

'Neceſſity abſolute in itſelf, and not depend- SERM.
'ing on any outward Cauſe; 'tis evident it XI.
'muſt be *every-where*, as well as *always*,
'unalterably the ſame.—For, *ſays he*, a Ne-
'ceſſity abſolutely ſuch in itſelf, has no Re-
'lation to Time or Place, or any Thing
'elſe. Whatever therefore exiſts by an ab-
'ſolute Neceſſity in its own Nature, muſt
'needs be Infinite as well as Eternal.'

And then he argues very cloſely and juſtly from the evident Abſurdity of ſuppoſing a Finite Being to be Self-Exiſtent.

'To ſuppoſe a Finite Being to be Self-
'Exiſtent; is to ſay that 'tis a Contra-
'diction for That Being not to exiſt, the
'Abſence of which may yet be conceived
'without a Contradiction. For, if a Being
'can without a Contradiction be abſent
'from one Place, it may without a Contra-
'diction be abſent likewiſe from another
'Place, and from all Places: And whatever
'Neceſſity it may have of exiſting, muſt
'ariſe from ſome external Cauſe, and not
'abſolutely from itſelf: And conſequently,
'the Being cannot be Self-Exiſtent.' *

* Idem Ibidem.
See alſo The Anſwers to the Firſt, Second, and Third Letters.

In

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In this Manner does this very learned and acute Writer clearly prove the Omnipreſence of God, from the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence: That is, from the Nature of the Firſt Cauſe; which is, and muſt neceſſarily be, Self-Exiſtent, and therefore Omnipreſent or Infinite.

But the Omnipreſence or Immenſity of God will likewiſe appear from hence. Unleſs we allow that the Firſt Cauſe is actually and immediately preſent Every-Where; we muſt own that it is limited, or confined; But Nothing can be limited or confined; unleſs it be by ſome Superior Power: And as Nothing can be Superior to the Firſt Cauſe; it plainly follows, that it cannot poſſibly be limited or confined; and therefore it muſt of Neceſſity be actually preſent Every-Where. *

But

* To the ſame Effect a very Maſterly Writer argues thus, for the Omnipreſence of the Self-Exiſtent Being.—'*Infinite* 'He muſt be, becauſe He can be *limited* by no other as to 'his Exiſtence. For if there was any Being able to limit 'him, He muſt be inferior to that Being. He muſt alſo in 'that Caſe be dependent: Becauſe he muſt be beholden to 'that Being, for his being *what He is*; and that He is not 'confined within narrower Limits. Beſide, if His *Preſence* '(whatever the Manner of it is) was any where excluded, 'He would not be *there*: And, if *not there*, He might be 'ſuppoſed to be *not elſewhere*: And thus he might be ſup-'poſed *not to be at all*.' *Wollaſton*'s Religion of Nature delineated. Sect. 5. Prop. 4.

To

But farther; If we consider God as a Serm. XI.
most perfect Being, we must needs conclude, That he must necessarily be present Every-Where. The First Cause of all must of Necessity be infinitely perfect. That is to say, he must necessarily be possessed of all Perfections in the highest and compleatest Manner; and without any Limitation of

To the same Purpose the ingenious Mr. *Jackson*. 'Finiteness or Limitation of Existence *is* an evident Imperfection, 'and supposes a Limiter superior to the Limited Being, and 'who by the Necessity of his Existence, is unlimited and absolutely immense. But a necessarily-existent Being cannot be *limited* by another; and it is absurd to suppose it limited 'by the Necessity of its own Nature, or to limit itself, which 'is to make itself *imperfect*: for to be *unlimited* or *immense*, 'is evidently a greater Perfection than to be limited or finite, which is as evidently an Imperfection. Necessity of 'Existence has no Relation to *Place* any more than it has 'to *Time*; and whatever is necessary at all, is, and must be 'necessary *in all Places* alike, as well as *in all Time*, and may 'as well be absent from *every* Place, as from *any* Place; 'and may as well and possibly not exist at all, as not exist 'always and every where.' *Existence and Unity of God proved from his Nature and Attributes.* Pages 123-4.

And again, in the same Place.

'*Limitation* of Existence, with Respect to *Place*, does 'necessarily infer *Limitation* of *Power*, &c. which is incompatible with the Nature and Idea of God, or a necessarily-'existent Being. The *Power* of God can only be exercised 'where He is, or where his Being or Substance (in which 'his Power is inherent) is present. *Power* which is a *Property*, cannot exist where the Substance of which it is the 'Property, does not exist; and God cannot *act where he is not*, any more than he can act without existing; and he 'has no Existence *where he is not*.'

See also, *The Defence of The Existence and Unity.* Pages 15, 16. 105-6-7. 175-6-7. 180-1-2-3. Also the *Appendix*, Pages 201-2-3.

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Meaſure or Degree. For a Being which is, in its own Nature, abſolutely perfect, muſt have all poſſible Perfections eſſentially inherent in him: And to ſuppoſe any of his Perfections to be, in any Degree, limited or confined; is to ſuppoſe them to be real Perfections, and evident Imperfections, at the ſame Time, which is an apparent Contradiction. For every Limitation of Power, Knowledge, Preſence, or any other Natural Attributes of the Deity is an evident Imperfection; and for this Reaſon cannot be aſcribed unto God. Since then God cannot be ſuppoſed to be limited in his Preſence, any more than in his Knowledge, or his Power, without aſcribing an Imperfection to him; it follows from hence, That God muſt needs be preſent Every-Where: Since he could not poſſibly be infinitely perfect without being ſo. For, as a great Maſter of Reaſon argues upon this Head of God's Omnipreſence; * It is a much greater Excellence

* On peut dire la même choſe de la toute-preſence de Dieu: il vaut mieux qu'il ſoit par tout dans l'étendue infinie de l'eſpace, que d'être exclus de quelque partie de cet eſpace, car s'il eſt exclû de quelque endroit, il ne peut pas y operer, ni ſçavoir ce qu'on y fait, et par conſequent il n'eſt ni tout-puiſſant ni omniſcient. *Lettre de Monſr. Locke à Monſr. Limborch.* *Locke*'s Works, Vol. 3. Fol. P. 565. Fourth Edition.

to

to be Every-Where preſent in the infinite Extent of Space; than to be excluded from any Part of Space: For if God be excluded from any particular Place, or Part of Space; he can neither exert his Power, nor know what paſſes there. And by Conſequence, he will neither be omnipotent, nor omniſcient. Thus we ſee what an intimate and inſeparable Connection there is between the Divine Attributes; between the Omnipotence and Omniſcience, and the Omnipreſence of God: Inſomuch that the former cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt, or BE, without the latter. SERM. IX.

But that God is actually preſent Every-Where, is ſtill farther evident from hence. The Attributes of God muſt neceſſarily be inſeparable from his Eſſence or Subſtance, and cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt without it: Therefore if the Attributes of God be neceſſarily infinite, the Eſſence or Subſtance muſt be ſo too: Becauſe the Attributes cannot poſſibly be more extenſive, or more perfect, than That Subſtance to which they belong.

Another Argument for the Divine Omnipreſence, which is urged by a very ingenious Author * is as follows.

* *Norris*'s Practical Diſcourſes. Vol. 2. Diſcourſe concerning the Conſideration of God, and of the Divine Preſence.

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'Tis every Whit as reaſonable to think the Eſſence of God to be every-where, as to be always; and that Immenſity is as rational as Eternity: That great and ſtupendous Being, who is allowed to reach through all Times, may as well be allowed to reach through all Places. Nay, much rather, ſince it ſeems to be a leſs Perfection to be every-where, than to be always. For to be always in Duration, is ſuch an intrinſical Denomination, as ſprings from the greateſt of all God's natural Perfections. For it ariſes from the Neceſſity of his Exiſtence; whereby he cannot but be, which is the higheſt Degree of Being, as being directly oppoſite to not Being, and conſequently of Perfection. But now to be every-where ſeems rather to be an extrinſical Denomination, relating to ſomewhat without, and ſuch as is not directly contrary to not Being, but only to limited Being. And if we aſcribe the greater to God, Why ſhould there be any Controverſy about the leſs?'

But we ſhall be farther convinced that God is actually and intimately preſent Every-Where, if we proceed to conſider,

2. The

2. The wonderful Works of Creation and Providence. SERM. XI.

But there not being Time for This at present; I must beg Leave to defer it to the next Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

On the Omnipresence of GOD

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy
Presence?
If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art
there: If I make my Bed in Hell,
behold thou art there.
If I take the Wings of the Morning,
and dwell in the uttermost Parts of
the Sea;
Even there shall thy Hand lead me,
and thy right Hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the Darkness shall
cover me: Even the Night shall be
Light about me.
Yea, the Darkness hideth not from
thee; but the Night shineth as the
Day: The Darkness and the Light
are both alike to thee.

IN my last Discourse on these Words, I propos'd

On the OMNIPRESENCE of GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence?

If I aſcend up into Heaven, thou art there: If I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea:

Even there ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me.

If I ſay, ſurely the Darkneſs ſhall cover me: Even the Night ſhall be Light about me.

Yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee; but the Night ſhineth as the Day: The Darkneſs and the Light are both alike to thee.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I propoſed SERM. XII.

SERM. XII.

I.

To ſhew The Omnipreſence of God: Or, That God is preſent Every-Where.

II.

That From his being thus preſent Every-Where; his Omniſcience will naturally follow: And he muſt, in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee, and know every Thing that paſſes.

And III.

I propoſed to ſhew, What Influence the Belief of Theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

Under the Firſt of theſe Heads, I have already ſhewn, from the Conſideration of God's Nature; That He is, and muſt neceſſarily be actually and intimately preſent Every-Where, and in all Places; with all Perſons, and to all Things.

And I proceed now to prove the ſame, more at large,

2. From the wonderful Works of Creation and Providence.

Wherever we ſee plain Marks, and evident Traces and Signatures of prodigious Art and Skill, of Contrivance and Deſign, and of Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs; there we may be infallibly aſſured, that

that God is, and muſt neceſſarily be preſent. For thoſe Effects muſt needs be owing to ſome adequate and proportionate Cauſe: And no Cauſe can poſſibly be proportioned to ſuch Effects, but the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature: That is to ſay, the Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of God. Wherever then we ſee any ſuch plain Marks, and evident Effects of Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs; there we may be ſure, that God is preſent: Becauſe the Attributes of God cannot be ſeparated from the Eſſence of the Deity, nor be capable of ſubſiſting without it. For God himſelf cannot work, where he is not: Where the Firſt Cauſe does not reach, he cannot exert his Wiſdom and his Power: Becauſe, That would be, to be preſent in a Place, and not preſent in it at the ſame Time, which is a Contradiction. From all which it does very plainly follow; That, as we do in every Quarter, and in every Part of the Creation; on the Earth, and in the Earth; in the Air, and in the Seas, behold ſuch a wonderful Variety of Moving-Life; and ſuch prodigious Numbers, and Claſſes of Beings, of various Natures; endowed with various Faculties and Powers, wiſely

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ſuited to their different Natures, and Situations in the World; and the various Ends, and Uſes, which Providence has deſigned them for: I ſay, ſince there is ſuch an inconceivable Variety of Creatures in the World, as can never come within the Notice and Obſervation of any One Man living; let him be never ſo * curious and inquiſitive; and let him have never ſo many Advantages and Opportunities of informing himſelf in ſuch Particulars: It follows from hence, That God is, and muſt be preſent Every-Where. For, wherever we ſee the Effects of the Divine Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs; there the Cauſes of thoſe Effects muſt neceſſarily reach: And as God is the Firſt Cauſe of all Things; wherever we ſee the Works of God, (and it is impoſſible to open our Eyes, and look about us without ſeeing them,) I ſay, wherever his Works are, there muſt He himſelf likewiſe be preſent.

As a very diligent and curious Enquirer into the Works of God expreſſes himſelf, †

* Atqui ne *curioſiſſimi* quidem homines *exquirendo* audire tam multa poſſunt, quam ſunt multa, quæ terrâ, mari, paludibus, fluminibus exiſtunt. *Cic. De Naturâ Deorum.* Lib. 1. Sect. 35. Ed. Lipſienſis.

† *Derham*'s Phyſico-Theology. Book 2d. Chap 6th. *Boyle*'s Lectures. Fol. Vol. 2. Page 581.

There

There is ſuch a 'Great Variety of Kinds, SERM.
'or Tribes, as well as prodigious Number XII.
'of Individuals of each various Tribe:—
'There are ſo many Beaſts, ſo many Birds,
'ſo many Inſects, ſo many Reptiles, ſo
'many Trees, ſo many Plants upon the
'Land; ſo many Fiſhes, Sea-Plants, and
'other Creatures in the Waters; ſo many
'Minerals, Metals, and Foſſils in the ſub-
'terraneous Regions; ſo many *Species* of
'theſe *Genera*, ſo many *Individuals* of thoſe
'*Species*, that there is Nothing wanting to
'the Uſe of Man, or any other Creature of
'this lower World.—* But the Munificence
'of the Creator is ſuch, that there is abun-
'dantly enough to ſupply the Wants, the
'Conveniencies, yea almoſt the Extrava-
'gancies of all the Creatures, in all Places,
'all Ages, and upon all Occaſions.'

Since then we do on every Hand, and in every Place ſee the wonderful Works of Creation and Providence regularly and conſtantly carried on; we cannot poſſibly doubt of God's being preſent Every-Where, and

* *To the ſame Purpoſe* Cicero *ſpeaks thus*, Sed illa quanta benignitas naturæ, quod tam multa ad veſcendum, tam varia, tamque jucunda gignit: Neque ea uno tempore anni: Ut ſemper & novitate delectemur, & copiâ. *Cic. De Nat. D.* Lib. 2. S. 52. P. 557.

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in all Places: Becauſe, his Creatures could not be produced, neither could they be ſuſtained and preſerved, without his continual Preſence and Power. The very meaneſt of all God's Creatures, and the moſt inconſiderable Part of his Works, does, as it were, ſpeak aloud to us, in the Name of God, and ſays to our Underſtandings. Behold! O Man, I am here alſo *Preſent* unto thee. This Creature, or this Work of mine, if duely conſidered, may be ſufficient to convince thee, if thou haſt any Degree of Senſe, or Reflection in thee, that I thy God, thy Creator, and Preſerver, *Am Preſent Here*; and indeed *Every-Where elſe*.

Every Creature that moves, may ſerve to convince us of God's being intimately *preſent* to it: Since it could not ſo much as move, or preſerve Life of itſelf: And without the *Preſence*, and the Power of God, it could not move, nor be at all. Every Animal, every Inſect, and every Worm; every Creature that flies in the Air, moves on the Earth, and ſwims in the Sea, does loudly proclaim the Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of its Creator: And by ſo doing does alike prove his immediate Preſence, without which thoſe Attributes could not ſubſiſt.

In

In like Manner every Tree, and every Plant, every Herb, and every Flower; every Ear, and every Blade of Corn, and every Spire and Pile of Graſs; and all the various medicinal Qualities of the Vegetable Creation; do all jointly conſpire to ſet forth, and diſplay the amazing Skill and Wiſdom of the Divine Artiſt: And to convince us of his Almighty Power; his Infinite Goodneſs; and, at the ſame Time, of his immediate and intimate Preſence to all Things, with all Perſons, and in all Places. SERM. XII.

And again, if we lift up our Eyes, and behold thoſe glorious Orbs which rowl over our Heads; and proceed in their ſeveral Courſes, with the utmoſt Order and Regularity; without any the leaſt Declination from their reſpective Orbits; and without claſhing together: It muſt needs, as a Great Philoſopher expreſſes it, * 'Raiſe our Admiration 'of the ſtupendous Power and Wiſdom of 'Him, who was able to frame ſuch im-'menſe Bodies; and, notwithſtanding their 'vaſt Bulk, and ſcarce conceivable Rapidity, 'keep them for ſo many Ages conſtant both

* *Boyle*'s Enquiry into the Final Cauſes of Natural Things. *Shaw*'s Abridgement. Vol. 2. Page 172.

'to

SERM. XII. ‘ to the Lines and Degrees of their Motion, ‘ without interfering with one another.’

Well therefore might the Stoic, in *Cicero*, lay this down as an undoubted Truth, * That the World, and all the ſeveral Parts of it, were at firſt created and eſtabliſhed; and have been at all Times ſuſtained, and preſerved, by the good Providence of God. For as the ſame Heathen Sage ſays upon the ſame Occaſion; † What can be more plain and clear, if we do but look up unto Heaven, and contemplate thoſe cœleſtial Bodies; than That there is Some Being of moſt excellent Wiſdom, who preſides over, and directs their Motions?

Nay, the Heathen Philoſophers were ſo ſenſible of the abſolute Neceſſity of ſome Intelligent and Almighty Being, to preſide over the Univerſe, and to direct and guide all the various Proceſſes and Operations of Nature: That they believed God to be, as it were, The Great Soul of the World; which animated, informed, and enlivened every

* Dico igitur providentiâ Deorum mundum, & omnes mundi partes, & initio conſtitutas eſſe, & omni tempore adminiſtrari. *Cic. De N. D.* L. 2. S. 30.

† Quid enim poteſt eſſe tam apertum, tamque perſpicuum, cum cœlum ſuſpeximus, cœleſtiaque contemplati ſumus, quam eſſe *Aliquod Numen* præſtantiſſimæ mentis, quo hæc regantur. *Ibidem*, S. 2.

Part

Part of it; and was the only true Cauſe of all thoſe various Productions which they ſaw in it. Thus *Cicero* tells us, That *Pythagoras* held, * That there was One Univerſal Mind, which was equally diffuſed through all Things, and pervaded all Things. And he likewiſe informs us, † That *Plato*, *Zenophen*, SERM. XII.

* Pythagoras cenſuit, animum eſſe per naturam rerum omnem intentum, & commeantem. *Cic. Ibidem.* Lib. 1. Sect. 11.

Qui vero mundum ipſum animantem, ſapientemque eſſe dixerunt, nullo modo viderunt animi naturam, intelligentes in quam figuram cadere poſſet.

And again,

Si mundus eſt Deus, quoniam partes mundi ſunt, Dei membra partim ardentia, partim refrigerata dicenda ſunt. *Idem Ibidem.* Sect. 10.

† Idem (Plato) & in Timæo dicit, & in Legibus, & mundum Deum eſſe, & cœlum, & aſtra, & terram, & animos, & eos, quos majorum inſtitutis accepimus. *Idem Ibidem.* Sect. 12.

Atque etiam Xenophon paucioribus verbis eadem fere peccat. *Idem Ibidem.*

Ariſtoteles quoque in tertio de Philoſophiâ libro multa turbat, à magiſtro Platone uno (‡ non) diſſentiens. Modo enim menti tribuit omnem divinitatem: Modo mundum ipſum Deum dicit eſſe: Modo quendam alium præficit mundo, eique eas partes tribuit, ut replicatione quadam mundi motum regat, atque tueatur: Tum cœli ardorem Deum dicit eſſe, non intelligens, cœlum mundi eſſe partem: Quem alio loco ipſe deſignârit Deum. *Idem Ibid.* Sect. 13.

‡ Non *is moſt likely to be the true Reading: Becauſe of the exact Agreement between the Sentiments of* Ariſtotle, *and his Maſter,* Plato, *on this Head: Both of them ſpeaking with great Uncertainty in this Matter of the Deity; ſometimes making the Univerſe to be God; and ſuppoſing the Deity to be vitally united to the whole material Syſtem, and to animate and actuate the Whole, as the Soul of Man animates and actuates his Body: Sometimes they ſuppoſe the Deity to be diſtinct from the Univerſe, but to have a Sort of Body, either of a fiery or airy Nature: And ſometimes they rightly ſuppoſed the Deity to*

be

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phon, and *Ariſtotle*, and others, did alſo hold the ſame Opinions, with very little Difference.

Now

be a pure Mind or Intellect, devoid of all Body, but endowed with inconceivable Perfections, by Virtue of which he actuated the Univerſe, and directed and governed the whole Courſe of Nature. To this Purpoſe Plato *ſpeaks in his Tenth Book of Laws.*

ΑΘ.

Ἥλιον εἴπερ ἄγει ψυχὴ, τριῶν αὐτὴν ἓν λέγοντες δρᾶν, σχιδὸν οὐκ ἀπολυξόμεθα. ΚΛ. Τίνων; ΑΘ. Ὡς ἡ ἐνοῦσα ἐντὸς τῷ περιφέρει τούτῳ φαινομένῳ σώματι, πάντη διαπομίζει τὸ τοιοῦτον, καθάπερ ἡμᾶς ἡ παρ' ἡμῖν ψυχὴ πάντη περιφέρει· ἢ ποθὲν ἔξωθεν σῶμα ἄψυχον παρεσκευασμένη πυρὸς, ἢ τινὸς ἀέρος, ὡς λόγος ἐστὶ λιπῶν, ὠθεῖ βίᾳ σώματι σῶμα· ἢ τρίτον, αὐτὴ ψυχὴ σώματος οὖσα, ἔχουσα δὲ δυνάμεις ἄλλας τινὰς ὑπερφαλλούσας θαυμαστὰ ποδηγεῖ. ΚΛ. Ναί. ΑΘ. Τοῦτο μὲν ἀνάγκη, τούτων ἓν γέ τι δρῶσαν ψυχὴν πάντα διάγειν. Platonis De Rebus Divinis Dialogi Selecti. *Lib.* 10. *De Legibus. Editio Cantab.*

And with Reſpect to *Ariſtotle*, a great Maſter and Judge of Antiquity ſpeaks thus, — 'Whatever the Doctrine of the 'modern Peripateticks be, we make no Doubt at all, but 'that *Ariſtotle* himſelf held the World's Animation, or a 'Mundane Soul; Foraſmuch as he plainly declares himſelf 'concerning it, in his Book *De Cælo*, after this Manner;

Ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς ὡς περὶ σωμάτων μόνον αὐτῶν, καὶ μοναδῶν, τάξιν μὲν ἐχόντων, ἀψύχων δὲ παμπαν, διανοούμεθα· δεῖ δὲ ὡς μετεχόντων ὑπολαμβάνειν πράξεως καὶ ζωῆς.

'*But we commonly think of the Heavens, as Nothing elſe but* 'Bodies and Monads, *having only a certain Order, but altogether inanimate; whereas we ought on the contrary to conceive of them, as partaking of Life and Action*: That is, as 'being endued with a Rational or Intellectual Life.

'But farther, to take away all Manner of Scruple or 'Doubt, concerning this Buſineſs; That Philoſopher before 'in the ſame Book, ῥητῶς *affirmeth*, Ὅλι ὁ οὐρανὸς ἔμψυχος, 'καὶ ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἔχει, *That the Heaven is animated, and hath* 'a *Principle of Motion within itſelf*: Where by the Heaven, 'as in many other Places of *Ariſtotle* and *Plato*, is to be underſtood the whole World.' *Cudworth*'s True Intellectual Syſtem of The Univerſe. Book 1. Chap. 3d. Pages 169, 170, 171.

Thus

Now although this Notion, of God's being the Soul of the World, may ſeem too groſs SERM. XII.

Thus *Seneca* aſks, What is God? The Mind (or Soul) of the Univerſe. What is God? All That which you ſee; (or, the whole viſible Creation) And at the ſame Time, a great Deal more; or, infinitely more than you can poſſibly ſee.

Quid eſt Deus? Mens Univerſi. Quid eſt Deus? Quod vides totum, & quod non vides totum. And then he admirably well deſcribes his Omnipreſence. This, ſays he, is the beſt Way of conceiving his Greatneſs, or his Infinity; (than which Nothing greater can be imagined) if we ſuppoſe him to be, in Effect, ALL THINGS; and that he pervades, and circumſcribes all his Works.

Sic demum magnitudo ſua illi redditur, quâ nihil majus excogitari poteſt, ſi *Solus eſt Omnia*, opus ſuum & extra & intra tenet. *Natural Quæſt.* Lib. 1. *In Præfat.*

Again,—Eundem, quem nos, Jovem intelligunt, cuſtodem rectoremque Univerſi, *Animum* ac *Spiritum*, mundani hujus operis dominum & artificem, cui nomen omne convenit.

And again,—Vis illum Naturam vocare? Non peccabis. Eſt enim, ex quo nata ſunt omnia, cujus ſpiritu vivimus. Vis illum vocare MUNDUM? Non falleris. Ipſe enim eſt, totum quod vides, totus ſuis partibus inditus. *Idem Ib.* Lib. 2. Cap. 45.

And the Emperor *Marcus Antoninus* addreſſes himſelf to the Univerſe, in this Manner. O World, whatever is agreeable to thy General Syſtem, is agreeable to me. Πᾶν μοι συναρμόζει, ὃ σοι εὐάρμοστόν ἐστι, ὦ κόσμε.

And again, Ὦ φύσις, ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα. O Nature, Of thee are all Things; in, or, by thee are all Things; and to thee are all Things. *Marci Antonini.* Lib. 4. Sect. 23. Ed. Oxon.

This is much ſuch a Manner of ſpeaking as St. *Paul* makes Uſe of, *Rom.* xi. 36. Ἐξ αὐτοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα.

From whence one would be tempted to conjecture, That the ſtudious and inquiſitive Genius of this Royal Philoſopher had brought him acquainted with the Writings of this Great Apoſtle. And indeed thoſe Precepts of forgiving Enemies, which ſo frequently occur in this Author, are, I think, ſufficient to confirm us in this Opinion.

Again,

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groſs to be entertained by any Perſons, whoſe Minds were improved by Philoſophy and Science: Yet, if we conſider the great Darkneſs and Ignorance of the World, with Reſpect to Religious Matters; and the firm Footing which Idolatry had thereby got in every Part of it; not excepting even the

Again, this Author ſays, That the World is, as it were, One individual Animal, conſiſting of one individual Subſtance, and one individual Soul.

Ὡς ἓν ζῶον τὸν κόσμον, μίαν οὐσίαν καὶ ψυχὴν μίαν ἐπίσχῃ, συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖν. Idem Ib. *Sect.* 40.

Elſewhere thus, Κόσμός τε γὰρ εἷς διὰ ἁπάντων, Θεὸς εἷς διὰ πάντων, καὶ οὐσία μία, καὶ νόμος εἷς, λόγος κοινὸς πάντων τῶν νοερῶν ζώων. *Lib.* 7. *Sect.* 9.

And again, Ὁ τὸ βέλτιστα ταύτης (τῶν ὅλων φύσεως) παραβαίνων, ἀσεβεῖν δηλονότι εἰς τὴν πρεσβυτάτην τῶν Θεῶν. ἡ γὰρ τῶν ὅλων φύσις, ὅλων ἐστὶ φύσις. *Lib.* 9. *Sect.* 1.

Here this Author calls the Nature of the Univerſe, or Univerſal Nature, The Oldeſt of Gods, or The Firſt of Gods; or, what we may call, The Firſt of Beings. And the Reaſon he gives for This is, That the Nature of the Univerſe comprehends in it the Nature of all other Things that exiſt. And preſently after he calls the Nature of the Univerſe, the Nature of the World: From whence it appears very plainly, that he ſuppoſed the World to be God; or rather, God to be the Soul of the World.

—Καθόσον διαφωνεῖ τῇ τῶν ὅλων φύσει, καὶ καθόσον ἀκοσμεῖ, μαχόμενος τῇ τοῦ Κόσμου φύσει. *Ibid.* And to the ſame Purpoſe in other Parts of this Section.

And afterwards, laying down ſome excellent Rules of Life, he ſays, If we practice them, we ſhall be worthy of That World, which begat, produced, or made us.

Ἔση ἄνθρωπος ἄξιος τοῦ γεννήσαντος Κόσμου. *Lib.* 12. *Sect.* 1.

And then preſently afterwards he aſcribes Omniſcience to the World.

Ὁ Θεὸς πάντα ὁρᾷ. *Sect.* 2. *Item Sect.* 26. 30. 32. And in ſeveral other Places in this Author.

choſen People of the Supreme God himſelf: I ſay, if we conſider all this, we ſhall be ſurprized to think; how the Underſtanding of Man could, under ſuch great Diſadvantages, ſtretch itſelf ſo far, and exert itſelf to ſuch a Degree, as to attain to the Notion of One Univerſal Mind, which animated, enlivened, actuated, and pervaded all Things: And which preſided over, directed and guided the whole Courſe of Nature. And if it appears, that they fluctuated and wavered in their Opinions; ſometimes making the Deity to be pure Mind and Intellect: And ſometimes ſuppoſing This Mind to be vitally united to the whole material Syſtem; and to inform, and enliven every Part of it: And ſometimes to have a Body of a peculiar Kind, diſtinct and different from the material Word: If they fluctuated and wavered in this Manner; and did not know where to fix, nor which Opinion to abide by: It will only ſerve to convince us the more effectually of the great Inſufficiency of Human Reaſon, to direct and guide us to the right Knowledge of the One only True God; and to inſtruct and teach us, to worſhip, and to ſerve him in the moſt becoming and acceptable Manner. SERM. XII.

And

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And the moſt enlightened of all the Heathens, *Socrates*, was ſo ſenſible of the Neceſſity of ſome Divine Inſtruction in this Matter; That he ſaid, * 'Twas neceſſary to wait, till ſome One ſhould come to teach them their Duty to God, and Men. And when his Diſciple *Alcibiades* aſked him, When this Time would come? And Who This extraordinary Teacher ſhould be? *Socrates* tells him; (but without being able to aſſign the Time, When;) That it was He who conſtantly took Care of him; and ſuſtained and preſerved him. That is, God. As appears from the Similitude he makes Uſe of to illuſtrate the Subject he was upon. For, ſays he, as *Homer* tells us, That *Minerva* removed the Miſt that was before the Eyes of *Diomede*; That ſo he might be able to diſtinguiſh the Gods from Men: Even ſo muſt This Teacher remove the Miſt which now

* Ἀναγκαῖον ἂν ἐϛι περιμένειν ἕως ἄν τις μαθὴ ὡς δεῖ πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διακεῖσθαι. Α. Πότε δὴ παρέϛαι ὁ χρόνος οὗτος, ὦ Σώκρατες; καὶ τίς ὁ παιδεύσων;—ΣΩΚΡ. Οὗτός ἐϛιν ὦ μέλει περὶ σοῦ. ἀλλὰ δοκεῖ μοι, ὥσπερ τῷ Διομήδει φησὶ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν Ὅμηρος ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀφελεῖν τὴν ἀχλύν,

Ὄφρ' εὖ γιγνώσκοι ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα,

ἕτω καὶ σὲ δεῖ ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πρῶτον ἀφελόντα τὴν ἀχλὺν, ἃ νῦν πάρεσα τυγχάνει, τἀληθῆ αὐτ' ἤδη προσφέρειν δι' ὧν μέλλεις, γνώσεσθαι ἡμῖν κακὸν ἡδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν. νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἄν μοι δοκεῖς δύνασθαι. Platonis Alcibiades II. *prope Finem.*

darkens

darkens your Eyes; and enable you to ſee clearly, and to judge rightly; before you can diſtinguiſh Good from Evil; which at preſent you ſeem incapable of doing. SERM. XII.

So far was the Light of Nature from being able to lead Men to the Knowledge of God, and their Duty to him, in the Judgment of this wiſe Heathen!

But however groſs the Conceptions of the Heathen Sages were concerning the Nature of God; yet they were generally agreed thus far, as to the Doctrine of my Text, that God is preſent Every-Where.

Thus *Seneca* ſays, * Turn which Way you will, God meets you there: There is no Place, where he is not preſent: For he fills all his Works. And again elſe-where he ſays, † God is preſent; or, at Hand, as it were, Every-Where, and with all Perſons: And miniſters to, and attends upon the whole Race of Mankind. With Reverence be this ſpoken!

And the Emperor *Marcus Antoninus* ſays, ‡ That all the Works of God give us abun-

* Quocunque te flexeris, ibi illum videbis occurrentem tibi. Nihil ab illo vacat: opus ſuum ipſe implet. *De Beneficiis.* Lib. 4. Cap. 8.

† Ipſe (Deus) humano generi miniſtrat: ubique et omnibus præſto eſt. *Epiſt.* 95.

‡ Τὰ τῶν Θεῶν προνόιας μεστά. *Marci Antonini. L.* 3. *S.* 3.

dant Proofs of his Providence. And again, in another Place, * comparing this Life to a Voyage, he ſays thus; You embarked, as it were, into Life; you have had a favourable Gale, and a ſafe Paſſage; and are now happily got into Port: Therefore go boldly aſhoar: And although it be into another Life; yet you need not be afraid: Becauſe, there is no Place, even there, where God is not Preſent.

A wonderful Sentiment this for a Heathen! And which may adminiſter ſome Comfort and Conſolation to the moſt timorous. Since we have more abundant Reaſon to be aſſured, That God is intimately and immediately preſent Every-Where! And that he takes effectual Care of us at all Times, and in all Places; Every-Where, and upon all Occaſions; Both in our Natal, and our Dying Hour; as a Great Poet ſpeaks: As well, when we go out of this World, as as when we come into it.

And again *Cicero* tells us, † That the Old Poet *Ennius* held an Univerſal Mind, which he

* —— Ἐνέβης, ἔπλευσας, καλῇχθης· ἐκβηθι. εἰ μὲν ἐφ' ἱππεῖον, οὐδὲν Θεῶν κενὸν, οὐδὲ ἐκεῖ. Idem. *Lib.* 3. *Sect.* 3.

† —— Quod ni ita eſſet, (nempe, Eſſe aliquod Numen præſtantiſſimæ mentis, quo hæc regantur.) Quî potuiſſet aſſenſu omnium dicere Ennius?

Adſpice hoc ſublime candens, quem invocant omnes
Jovem; Illum

be called *Jupiter*, to be the Supreme Gover- SREM.
nor of all Things, ruling them according to XII.
his Will. And this Being, whom *Ennius* calls the Father both of Gods, and Men; that is, the Supreme God; *Cicero* does very juſtly ſtile,

An *Omnipreſent* and Almighty God.

Thus generally were the Heathens themſelves agreed in the Belief of God's Omnipreſence! And indeed no Wonder they ſhould all concur in this Opinion: Since the beautiful Works of Creation and Providence were ſufficient to convince them of the Truth of it. For, as the Apoſtle obſerves, *That which may be known of God*, in this preſent State, by the Uſe of Reaſon only; was by this Means made *manifeſt* unto *them*. By the Help of this Method did God plainly *ſhew it unto them*. *For the inviſible Things of him from the Creation of the World were clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead*. And as they ſaw Every-Where, in all Parts of the Creation, evident Marks, and

Rom. i. 19.

ver. 20.

Illum vero et Jovem, et dominatorem rerum, et omnia nutu regentem, et, ut idem *Ennius*,

——————*Patrem Divumque Hominumque,*
Et *Præſentem*, ac *Præpotentem Deum*.

De Nat. Deor. *Lib.* 2. *Sect.* 2.

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Signatures, and plain Traces of God's Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs: They did very juſtly conclude, That God was preſent Every-Where. And although they generally entertained wrong Notions, and unworthy Apprehenſions of the Divine Nature; And, in Conſequence of this, worſhipped a great Number of falſe Gods: * Yet as to the Being of ſome inviſible Power, (or Powers) which preſided over, and directed the Whole Courſe of Nature, and was ſome Way, or other, preſent Every-Where; the wiſer and better Part of them at leaſt were in General agreed.

† The regular Motion of the Heavenly Bodies lead them indeed to believe that they were inhabited by ſo many different Divinities: And accordingly they worſhipped *The Sun, the Moon, and all the Hoſt of Heaven,*

Jer. viii. 2.

* Omnibus innatum eſt, et in animo quaſi inſculptum, eſſe Deos. Quales ſint, varium eſt: eſſe nemo negat. *Ibidem.* Sect. 5.

† Senſum autem aſtrorum, atque intelligentiam maxime declarat ordo eorum, atque conſtantia. Nihil eſt enim, quod ratione et numero moveri poſſit ſine conſilio: In quo nihil eſt temerarium, nihil varium, nihil fortuitum. Ordo autem ſiderum, et in omni æternitate conſtantia, neque naturam ſignificat; eſt enim plena rationis: Neque fortunam, quæ amica varietati conſtantiam reſpuit. Sequitur ergo, ut ipſa *Suâ Sponte, Suo Senſu,* ac *Divinitate* moveantur. *Ibid.* Sect. 16.

as ſo many diſtinct Deities: Whilſt * others did, though with ſome Degree of Doubt and Fluctuation of Opinion, believe, That One Univerſal Mind did, as it were, inhabit, animate and actuate the whole Material Syſtem. SERM. XII.

But however unworthily ſome of the Heathens may have thought of God: Yet to us, who happily enjoy greater Advantages than they were bleſſed with; and who can for this Reaſon, better read and underſtand the Great Book of Nature: To us, I ſay, *The Heavens* do ſufficiently *declare the Glory of God: And the Firmament ſheweth his handy Work.* Pſalm xix. 1.

But not only the Heavenly Bodies, and their orderly Motions and Revolutions declare God's Being and his Preſence: But every Part of the World furniſhes us with Proofs of theſe important Truths. Thoſe wonderful Works of Creation and Providence which are regularly, and conſtantly carried on before our Eyes every Day, and in every Place,

* Ψυχὴν δὴ διοικοῦσαν καὶ ἐνοικοῦσαν ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς πάλῃ κινουμένοις μὲν ἐ καὶ τὸν ἔρανὸν ἀνάγκη διοικεῖν φάναι;

And again, Ἄγει μὲν δὴ ψυχὴ πάντα τὰ καθ' ἔρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν, ταῖς αὑτῆς κινήσεσι. Platonis De Legibus. *Lib.* 10. *Sect.* 11.

Vide etiam Platonis Timæum. Item, Timæum Locrum De Animâ Mundi.

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may ſerve to convince us, That God is, and muſt be preſent Every-Where, and in all Places: For, without his Preſence and his Power, neither we ourſelves, nor any other Creatures could ſubſiſt, or live a Moment. *In him* alone it is, That we do, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *live, and move, and have our Being*: And without his Preſence and his Providence, the ſeveral Animal Functions which are neceſſary to Life; ſuch as Digeſtion, the Circulation of the Blood, Nutrition, Secretion, and Reſpiration, could not be rightly diſcharged; as they conſtantly are, every Moment of our Lives; ſleeping, as well as waking; without any Conſciouſneſs or Concurrence on our Part. Well therefore may we break out into this Exclamation of the Pſalmiſt. *Lord, what is Man, that thou haſt ſuch Reſpect unto him: Or the Son of Man, that thou ſo regardeſt him? I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well.*

Acts xvii. 28.

Pſa. cxliv. 3.

cxxxix. 13.

Without God's Preſence and Power, the meaneſt Creature that lives and moves; and the vileſt Weed that grows, could not poſſibly be produced. But if we conſider what a wonderful Variety of Creatures there is in the

the World; what numberleſs Kinds, and Ranks do, as it were, ſwarm in every Part of this viſible World; we muſt needs believe, That God is intimately preſent to all his Works: Seeing that it is He alone who *giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all Things.* Acts xvii. 26.

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Nor is it ſufficient to object here, That as God has eſtabliſhed the Laws of Nature, and put every Thing into a regular, orderly Courſe; he now leaves Things to themſelves, and to the Management of Second Cauſes: And that for this Reaſon, there is no Neceſſity of ſuppoſing him to be preſent Every-Where: And as to the Production of Animals and other Creatures; and what is carried on in the vegetable Creation; All this may be accounted for from the Plaſtick Power of Nature; which is ſufficient to produce what we ſee in the World; without ſuppoſing the Deity to be here, and there, and every-where: When Things may as well be carried on, without him.

But not to mention all the Conſequences of theſe wild Notions; I ſhall only obſerve,

Firſt, That what is commonly called the Laws of Nature, does in Strictneſs ſignify no more than thoſe fixed and unalterable Rules, which God has, in great Wiſdom and

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Goodneſs, thought fit to preſcribe to himſelf, in the Courſe of his Operations upon Matter; and in his Production of Things out of it. Either this muſt be the Meaning of what the Learned call The Laws of Nature; or elſe the Words have no tolerable Senſe, or Meaning. For, to ſuppoſe that the Laws of Nature are diſtinct from, and independent of, the Will and Power, and Providence of God; is, to aſcribe Being to a Non-Entity; to ſuppoſe Power and Activity in a Subject which has no real Exiſtence; and Conſciouſneſs, Intelligence, and Wiſdom in a meer imaginary Being, which has not any the leaſt Shadow of Exiſtence. Therefore when Men talk of the Laws of Nature, and the Powers of Nature; we muſt neceſſarily conclude, That they mean the Power of God, and the Methods of his Providence; and the Rules and Meaſures which he confines himſelf to, in his Operations upon Matter; upon the ſeveral Parts of this viſible World; and the ſeveral Creatures which we ſee in it.

Without this Interpoſition of the Deity, the heavenly Bodies could not rightly perform their ſeveral Revolutions, nor keep themſelves conſtantly within their reſpective Orbits. Without this, *the Moon* could not

Pſa. civ. 19.

know

know its *appointed Seasons*: Nor *the Sun* the Time of its *going down*.

And again,

Secondly, As to what is called the Plastick Power of Nature; unless we mean by it the Creative and Forming Power of God; the Words have no good Sense, or Meaning at all. The Word Plastic comes from the Greek Word, Πλάσσω, or Πλάττω; which signifies to fashion or to form; as a Potter fashions, or forms a Lump of Clay into That Vessel which he designs it for. But to ascribe this Power of fashioning, or forming Things, to No-Body knows What; to a blind Unintelligent Principle; which does not know, what it is about, nor what End it acts for; is, in Reality to ascribe the Power of Creation to That, which is not able to produce so wonderful an Effect. It is in Truth to attribute Omnipotence to That which has no real Being; to That which is Nothing, and knows Nothing, and can do Nothing: Or, at best, it is to ascribe too much to Matter, and too little to God. It is in Effect to set aside the Infinite Wisdom, and Power of God, to discard his Providence; and to introduce a Principle, which, if it be any Thing at all, must lead us at last to downright Atheism.

There

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There are ſome indeed, very ſtrenuous Advocates for the Being of God and a Providence, who think it beneath the Majeſty of God to form, as it were, with his own Hands, the Body of every Gnat, and Fly, Inſect, and Mite: Foraſmuch as this would render the Divine Providence operoſe, ſollicitous and diſtractious: At leaſt according to vulgar Apprehenſions. * And for this Reaſon, † They conclude, 'That there is a 'Plaſtick Nature under him, which as an 'inferior and ſubordinate Inſtrument, doth 'drudgingly execute That Part of his Provi-'dence, which conſiſts in the regular and 'orderly Motion of Matter: Yet ſo as that 'there is alſo beſides this, a Higher Provi-'dence to be acknowledged, which preſi-'ding over it, doth often ſupply the Defects 'of it, and ſometimes over-rule it; for as 'much as this Plaſtick Nature cannot act 'electively, nor with Diſcretion.' Becauſe, '‡ Though it acts artificially, for the Sake 'of Ends, yet itſelf doth neither intend 'thoſe Ends, nor underſtand the Reaſon of 'what it doth.' And for this Reaſon § They

* See *Cudworth*'s True Intellectual Syſtem of the Univerſe. *Pages* 147. 149. 150. † *Ibidem*, Page 150. ‡ Pages 155-6-7. 162. § *Ibidem*, Page 158.

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe it to be 'Always inwardly prompted, 'ſecretly whiſpered into, and inſpired by the 'Divine Art and Wiſdom.' SERM. XII.

But it ought to be obſerved, That thoſe Perſons who argue for a Plaſtick Principle in Animals, and in the Inanimate Part of the Creation, do not ſuppoſe it to be any Property of Matter; but a Principle diſtinct from Matter, and under the immediate Direction and Care of the Deity. They hold it to be a Sort of Life, * though indeed the laſt and loweſt of all Lives; and being a real Kind of Life, They ſay it muſt needs be incorporeal; all Life being ſuch. And as it is and muſt neceſſarily be incorporeal; They ſay, † It muſt of Neceſſity, be either an inferior Power or Faculty of ſome Soul, which is either conſcious, ſenſitive, or rational; or elſe a lower Subſtantial Life by itſelf, devoid of all animal Conſciouſneſs. But which of theſe it is, they do not determine. However they lay this down as a certain Truth, ‡ 'That the Plaſtick Nature 'eſſentially depends upon Mind or In-'tellect; and could not poſſibly be without 'it.'

* *Idem Ibid.* P. 162, 163, 164. † Page 165. ‡ *Idem Ibid.* P. 171,-2.

Whether

SERM. XII. Whether this Notion of a Plaſtick Nature be right or not; I ſhall not take upon me to determine. It is ſufficient for my preſent Purpoſe to obſerve, That thoſe who inſiſt moſt upon it, make it to be eſſentially dependent upon the Deity: And they plainly ſuppoſe, That his Concurrence, Superintendence, and Direction, are eſſentially neceſſary to its Operation. And if ſo; Then it will follow, That wherever we ſee the Works of Creation, and Providence, regularly and conſtantly carried on; There God muſt be intimately and immediately preſent: Becauſe, This Plaſtick Principle could not exert itſelf without his Concurrence, his Preſence and Power. For, To ſuppoſe, That all Things ſhould be produced, in the Manner they are, by a Blind Unintelligent Principle; when we ſee ſo many, and ſuch plain Marks and Signatures of Infinite Art and Skill, Contrivance and Deſign, Wiſdom and Power, Bounty and Goodneſs; is to ſuppoſe, That theſe Effects are greater and more noble than That Cauſe, from whence they proceed, which is a Contradiction. This is, as the Author laſt mentioned expreſſes it, 'Altogether as irrational and abſurd, as if one ſhould ſuppoſe the Light

'that

'that is in the Air or *Æther*, to be the *Only* SERM.
'*Original* and *Fundamental* Light, and the XII.
'Light of the Sun and Stars but a *Secondary*
'and *Derivative* Thing from it, and No-
'thing but the Light of the Air *modificated*
'and *improved* by *Condensation*. Or, as if one
'shou'd maintain that the Sun, and Moon,
'and all the Stars were really nothing else,
'but the mere *Reflections* of those *Images*,
'that we see in Rivers and Ponds of Water.
'But this hath always been the sottish Hu-
'mour and Guise of Atheists, to invert the
'Order of the Universe, and hang the Pic-
'ture of the World, as of a Man, with its
'Heels upwards.' *

Upon the Whole then, we may very justly conclude, That God is, and must necessarily be intimately present Every-Where. Insomuch, that there is no Place, nor Part of Space; no Part, nor Corner of the Universe, where God is not. *If we climb up into Heaven, He is there: If we go down to Hell, He is there also. If we take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea; Even there also shall his Hand lead us, and his Right Hand shall hold us.*

But although we have all possible Reasons to be assured, That God is, and must be

* Chap. 3. P. 173.

present

SERM. preſent Every-Where: Yet ſuch is the preſent
XII. Condition of our Nature, that we cannot ſee him with our bodily Eyes. As holy
xxiii. 8,9 *Job* ſpeaks, *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the Left Hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: He hideth himſelf on the Right Hand, that I cannot ſee him.* God works upon our Right Hand, and upon our Left: And wherever he does work; we may be ſure that he is preſent: But how he can be here, and there, and Every-Where, at the ſame Time, we cannot poſſibly conceive. Such Knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us; and in our preſent imperfect State, we cannot by any Means attain unto it. As the ſame holy
xi. 8, 9. Perſon ſpeaks, *It is as high as Heaven, what can we do? Deeper than Hell, what can we know? The Meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* But notwithſtanding our Incapacity of conceiving it; we are ſure, That God is thus preſent Every-Where. Not only the Reaſon and Nature of the Thing, and the whole viſible Creation, do loudly proclaim this important Truth: But the Holy Scriptures do Every-Where ſuppoſe, and in ſome Places expreſsly declare; That God is preſent Every-

Every-Where. The Pſalmiſt does, in the Words of my Text, aſſure us of it in the plaineſt Manner. And *Solomon*, his Son, at the Dedication of the Temple, joins his Suffrage to that of his Father. *But will God indeed dwell on the Earth? Behold, the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee.* And God himſelf ſays thus, *The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footſtool.* Intimating that he was preſent Every-Where, and filled all Things. And elſe-where, he ſays thus, *Am I a God at Hand, ſaith the Lord, and not a God afar off. Can any hide himſelf in ſecret Places that I ſhall not ſee him? Saith the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and Earth? Saith the Lord.* And once more, He ſays of the *Iſraelites*, *He that fleeth of them, ſhall not flee away; and he that eſcapeth of them, ſhall not be delivered. Though they dig into Hell, thence ſhall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themſelves in the Top of* Carmel, *I will ſearch and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence will I command the Serpent, and he ſhall bite them.* Since then it appears from the Nature of God, and from the Works of Creation and Providence; and likewiſe

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1 Kings viii. 27.

Iſai. lxvi. 1.

Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

Amos ix. 1, 2, 3.

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likewiſe from the Holy Scriptures, That God is intimately and immediately preſent Every-Where, and in all Places, to all Perſons, and with all Things; What remains now, but That we all do *ſet God conſtantly before us*, and live always, as in his Preſence.

And in Order that we may all do ſo, I ought now in the Second Place,

II.

To ſhew, That from God's being thus preſent Every-Where, his Omniſcience will naturally follow: And he muſt, in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee and know Every Thing that paſſes.

But this muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever-more. Amen.

On

On the OMNISCIENCE of GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence?

If I aſcend up into Heaven, thou art there: If I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea:

Even there ſhall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand ſhall hold me.

If I ſay, ſurely the Darkneſs ſhall cover me: Even the Night ſhall be Light about me.

Yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee; but the Night ſhineth as the Day: The Darkneſs and the Light are both alike to thee.

IN my two laſt Diſcourſes on theſe Words, I propoſed SERM. XIII.

SERM. XIII.

I.

To ſhew The Omnipreſence of God: Or, That God is preſent Every-Where.

II.

That From his being thus preſent Every-Where; his Omniſcience will naturally follow: And he muſt, in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee, and know every Thing that paſſes.

And

III.

What Influence the Belief of theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

The Firſt of Theſe Heads I have already gone through.

And I come now in the Second Place, to ſhew, That From God's being preſent Every-Where, his Omniſcience will naturally follow: And He muſt, in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee, and know Every Thing that paſſes.

The ſame Arguments which ſerve to prove, That God is preſent Every-Where; will likewiſe equally evince the Divine Omniſcience, or the Infinite Wiſdom of God; and abundantly convince us, That He ſees and knows all Things.

Intelligence, or Underſtanding, muſt be allowed to be an Eſſential Attribute of God.

Now

Now as all the Divine Attributes are eſſentially inherent in the Divine Nature; and cannot poſſibly be ſeparated from it: No, not in Thought: It follows from hence, That if the Eſſence, or Nature of God, be neceſſarily Infinite; then his Intelligence, or Underſtanding, (or more properly his Knowledge) muſt of Neceſſity be ſo too. For, the Notion of Intelligence can no more be ſeparated from our Idea of God; than the Notion of Conſciouſneſs and Volition can poſſibly be ſeparated from our Conception of the Human Soul. If then God be actually and intimately preſent Every-Where, and to all Things; then he muſt neceſſarily ſee, and know all Things: Becauſe his Knowledge does neceſſarily extend as far as ever his Preſence reaches: And therefore if his Preſence be Infinite, his Knowledge muſt of Neceſſity be ſo too: Since the Eſſence of God can no more ſubſiſt without his Knowledge, than the Soul of Man can be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt without the Properties of Conſciouſneſs and Volition. SERM. XIII.

But farther, If we conſider God as the Firſt Cauſe; and as the continual Suſtainer and Preſerver of all Things that are; we ſhall be farther convinced of his Omniſcience,

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or his Infinite Wiſdom. All the Creatures, and all the Things that are in the World, are the Works of his Hands. All thoſe Faculties and Powers which the Animal Part of the Creation is endowed with, are the Gift of God: And all thoſe Properties and Qualities, which belong to inanimate Things, are alike derived from him. 'Twas he that framed and conſtituted their ſeveral Natures; and made them to be what they all are: From him they derived their ſeveral Natures at Firſt; and upon him and his Providence they do continually depend, for the Uſe and Exerciſe of their ſeveral Faculties and Powers; and for all thoſe various Properties and Qualities which they are endowed with: And without his continual Preſence and Power, they could not poſſibly exiſt; nor continue to be, as they are. Therefore, unleſs we could conceive thoſe Creatures, and thoſe Things to exiſt of themſelves; and to be independent of God: And to be capable of ſubſiſting of themſelves, without the continual Help and Aſſiſtance of his Power, and the Support of his Providence: I ſay, unleſs we could ſuppoſe This, which is an utter Impoſſibility; we cannot poſſibly imagine, That any Things can be concealed from his Knowledge,

ledge, or hid from his View. *Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World.* He is intimately acquainted with all their various Properties and Powers, their Qualities and Virtues, their Relations and Connections, their Conditions and Circumſtances, their Influences and Dependencies, their Alterations and Changes: And in ſhort, with all the poſſible Circumſtances both of Perſons and Things. He ſees and knows every Thing that will ariſe from all their poſſible Compoſitions and Combinations, Separations and Diviſions: And as they are derived from him, and depend upon him; he certainly knows beforehand every Thing which can be produced by them, or ſpring from them, in any Circumſtances which can be ſuppoſed. Therefore there is not *any* One *Creature*, nor any One Thing, *That is not manifeſt in his Sight: But all Things are naked and open unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

SERM. XIII. Acts xv. 18. Heb. iv. 13.

Therefore as God has ſuch a Comprehenſive and perfect View of all Things; and knows all their ſeveral Natures and Fitneſſes, with the utmoſt Exactneſs and Certainty: He muſt likewiſe certainly know every Thing that is, upon the Whole, beſt and fitteſt to

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be done. And as he has all the Laws of Nature, and the Powers of Nature, as they are called, under his Direction: Nay, the whole Creation, every the moſt minute Part of it, in his Diſpoſal, and at his Command: Nothing can poſſibly controul his Power, or obſtruct his Will. And as he has all poſſible Goodneſs to direct this Power to the beſt of Ends; it ſerves to render his Preſence, his Wiſdom, and his Power, ſtill more adorable to all his Creatures.

But we ſhall be ſtill farther convinced of God's Omniſcience, or his Infinite Wiſdom, or Knowledge; if we take a diſtinct and careful Survey of thoſe wonderful Works of Creation and Providence, which are daily carried on before our Eyes in every Part of this viſible World. If we look up to the Heavenly Bodies; and conſider all their ſeveral orderly Motions, and regular Revolutions: How they proceed in their reſpective Courſes, without any Deviation or Irregularity; and without interfering and claſhing with each other: We ſhall find abundant Reaſon to magnify That aſtoniſhing Wiſdom; which does ſo nicely adjuſt their ſeveral Diſtances, Motions and Velocities; that each of them holds on its proper Courſe,

without

without any Declination from its reſpective Orbit. SERM. XIII.

It is not ſufficient to object here, That as God has eſtabliſhed the Laws of Nature; he now leaves every Thing to the Management of Second Cauſes, and the general Courſe of Things which he ſettled at Firſt.

Not to mention, That This is no Argument againſt the Wiſdom of God; ſince they allow the Laws of Nature to be conſtituted and ſettled by him at Firſt: I would only obſerve, That let the Laws of Nature be never ſo wiſely contrived, and firmly eſtabliſhed; yet 'tis not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, That they ſhould be always able to execute themſelves, without any Interpoſition of the Deity. No. It is much more probable, That God himſelf conſtantly ſuperintends and directs their Motions: That he has, as it were, a conſtant Eye to the Obſervation of thoſe Laws, and guides and conducts the whole Courſe of Nature.

But if it were poſſible, to account rightly for all the ſeveral Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, upon Mechanical Principles: Yet this will not help us to underſtand, How it is the Earth brings forth her Fruits: How the Bodies of the various Sorts of Animals,

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Fowls, Fiſhes, Inſects, Reptiles; and in ſhort, all Sorts of Creatures, are formed: How they are all peculiarly framed, and fitted, and adapted to the ſeveral Ends, and Uſes, which Providence deſigned them for; and the different Elements and Situations they are placed in: And How ſuch a particular and ample Proviſion is made for all the various Wants and Exigencies of each particular Claſs, and Species of Beings. I ſay, Mechanical Principles will never help Men to account for all theſe Things, and a vaſt many more which it is not eaſy to ſpecify.

Who is it then? Or, What is it, That directs, and guides every Thing to its proper End; and adapts, and ſuits every Thing to its proper Uſe? Who is it that takes Care to prevent and hinder all Things from running into Univerſal Diſorder and Confuſion? Who is it that keeps every Thing in its due Courſe, and its proper Channel? How comes it to paſs, That all Things flow on in a regular orderly Manner, without ever varying from thoſe Rules which they go by? How ſhould ſenſeleſs Matter be of itſelf able to adjuſt its Motions, and govern all its Proceſſes and Operations according to thoſe invariable Rules? How ſhould the Sun be

able

able to know When he ought to viſit one Part of the Globe: And When it is Time for him to ſtop ſhort, as it were; to alter his Courſe, and to direct it towards another? Whence is it that he comes juſt near enough to the Earth, to comfort and refreſh it; but not ſo near to it, as to conſume and deſtroy it? How do the Seaſons ſucceed one another? And, in one Word, How does every Thing, that lives, moves, grows, and flouriſhes; live, move, grow, and flouriſh, as it does? How do all theſe Things come to paſs? Or, What is ſufficient for all theſe Things, but the Infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Preſence of God?

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Well therefore may we cry out with the Pſalmiſt, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works: In Wiſdom haſt thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches? So is the great and wide Sea alſo: Wherein are Things creeping innumerable, both ſmall and great Beaſts. Theſe all wait upon thee: That thou mayeſt give them Meat in due Seaſon. When thou giveſt it them, they gather it: And when thou openeſt thine Hand, they are filled with Good. When thou hideſt thy Face, they are troubled: When thou takeſt away their Breath, they die, and are turned again to their*

Pſa. civ. 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30.

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their Duſt. When thou letteſt thy Breath go forth, they ſhall be made: And thou ſhalt renew the Face of the Earth.

Upon the Whole then it appears, That the wonderful Works of Creation and Providence do as well prove the Infinite Wiſdom or Knowledge, as they ſerve to prove the Infinite Preſence, Power and Goodneſs of the Deity. And this Divine Omniſcience is likewiſe ſtill farther evident from the Nature, or Eſſence of God. And beſide all this, we have yet a better Proof behind; and one infinitely more valuable than all the dry Deductions of Human Reaſon: And That is, The infallible Word of God himſelf.

One very ample Teſtimony is found in the Pſalm of which my Text is a Part. Deeply ſenſible of God's Omniſcience, holy

ver. 1, 2, 3. *David* ſays thus, *O Lord, thou haſt ſearched me out, and known me: Thou knoweſt my down-ſitting, and mine up-riſing, thou underſtandeſt my Thoughts long before. Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed: And ſpieſt out all my Ways. For, lo, there is not a Word in my Tongue: But thou, O Lord, knoweſt it altogether.* And again, ſpeaking of God,

xi. 5. *His Eyes conſider the Poor: And his Eye-Lids try*

try the Children of Men. And again, *The* SERM.
Lord looked down from Heaven, and beheld all XIII.
the Children of Men: From the Habitation xxxiii. 13,
of his Dwelling he conſidereth all them that 14.
dwell on the Earth. He faſhioneth all the
Hearts of them: And underſtandeth all their
Works. And again, *Thou haſt ſet our Miſ-* xc. 8.
deeds before thee: And our ſecret Sins in the
Light of thy Countenance. And once more,
He that planted the Ear ſhall He not hear: xciv. 9.
Or He that made the Eye ſhall He not ſee?
And *Hanani* the Seer ſaid to *Aſa* King of
Judah, who was diſtruſtful of God's Pro-
vidence, after a ſignal Inſtance of the Di-
vine Protection. *The Eyes of the Lord run* 2 Chron.
to and fro thoughout the whole Earth, to ſhew xvi. 9.
himſelf ſtrong in the Behalf of them, whoſe
Heart is perfect towards him. And holy
Job ſaith, *He looketh to the Ends of the Earth,* xxviii.
and ſeeth under the whole Heaven. And 24.
again, *Doth not he ſee my Ways, and count all* xxxi. 4.
my Steps? And *Elihu* ſaith, *His Eyes are* xxxi. 21.
upon the Ways of Man, and he ſeeth all his 22.
Goings. There is no Darkneſs, nor Shadow
of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may
hide themſelves. And *Solomon* ſays, *The Ways* Prov. v.
of Man are before the Eyes of the Lord, and 21.
he pondereth all his Goings. And again he
ſays

SERM. XIII.

ſays elſewhere, *The Eyes of the Lord are in every Place, beholding the evil and the good.* And God himſelf ſays, by the Prophet *Jeremiah, Mine Eyes are upon all their Ways.* xv. 3. xvi. 17. *They are not hid from my Face, neither is their Iniquity hid from mine Eyes.* And again, xvii. 10. Alſo xxxii. 19. *I the Lord ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* And the Prophet *Zechariah* ſays, iv. 10. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole Earth.* And the Author of the Book of i. 6. Wiſdom ſaith, *Wiſdom is a loving Spirit: And will not acquit a Blaſphemer of his Words: For God is Witneſs of his Reins, and a true Beholder of his Heart, and a Hearer of his Tongue.* And then this Author giveth ver. 7. the Reaſon of God's Omniſcience. *For,* ſays he, *The Spirit of the Lord filleth the World.* And the Son of *Sirach* ſays thus, *Therefore all their Works are as the Sun before him, and his Eyes are continually upon their Ways. None of their unrighteous Deeds are hid from him, but all their Sins are before the Lord.* And our Bleſſed Saviour tells us, Luke xvi. 15. *That God knoweth our Hearts.* And when the eleven Apoſtles were about to chuſe a Perſon to *take Part of That Miniſtry and*

Apoſtleſhip, from which Judas *by Tranſgreſſion fell*; They prayed thus; *Thou Lord which knoweſt the Hearts of all Men, ſhew whether of theſe two thou haſt choſen.* And at the Firſt General Council of the Church, which was held at *Jeruſalem*, St. *Peter* ſays thus; *God which knoweth the Hearts*; and ſo forth. And St. *James* ſays on the ſame Occaſion, *Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World.* And St. *Paul*, *The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of the Wiſe, that they are vain.* And St. *John*, *God is greater than our Heart and knoweth all Things.* And to the ſame Purpoſe in many other Places of Scripture.

SERM. XIII.

Acts i 24. xv. 8. ver. 18. 1 Cor. iii. 20. 1 John iii. 20.

The Omnipreſence and Omniſcience of God being thus evident and clear, as I hope, I have made them appear to be in This, and my Two laſt Diſcourſes: I ſhould now in the Third and laſt Place,

III.

Endeavour to ſhew what Influence the Belief of theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

But not having Time ſufficient for this Purpoſe, it muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now

SERM. XIII. Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

The Influence, which the Consideration of God's Omnipresence and Omniscience ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?

If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there: If I make my Bed in Hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost Parts of the Sea:

Even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the Darkness shall cover me: Even the Night shall be Light about me.

Yea,

Yea, the Darkneſs hideth not from thee; but the Night ſhineth as the Day: The Darkneſs and the Light are both alike to thee.

SERM. XIV. IN my laſt Diſcourſes on theſe Words, I propoſed,

I.

To ſhew The Omnipreſence of God: Or, That God is preſent Every-Where.

II.

That From his being thus preſent Every-Where, his Omniſcience will naturally follow: And, He muſt, in Conſequence hereof, neceſſarily ſee and know Every Thing that paſſes.

And III.

What Influence the Belief of theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions.

The Two Firſt of Theſe Heads were fully made out, in my foregoing Diſcourſes on the Words of my Text.

And I come now in the Third and laſt Place,

III.

To ſhew what Influence the Belief of theſe Truths ought to have upon our Lives and Actions,

And

And Firſt, The Belief and Perſuaſion of God's being preſent Every-Where, and of his Knowing all Things, is of excellent Uſe to reſtrain us from all known Sin; and from all Approaches, and Tendencies towards it. When we ſeriouſly conſider, That God is intimately preſent Every-Where, and ſees and knows every Thing; and obſerves and takes Notice of all our Behaviour; That he narrowly watches and obſerves every one of our Actions, and every ſecret Thought, and every hidden Motion and Intention of our Hearts: I ſay, when we conſider all This ſeriouſly, as we ought to do; we ſhould be particularly careful, not to do, nor ſay, nor even to think any Thing, which may give Offence to ſo holy, and pure a Being, as God is. We ſhould, as the Pſalmiſt did, *Set God always before us*; and walk daily, as in his Preſence. SERM. XIV. Pſa. xvi. 8.

Wherever we are, wherever we go, and whatever we are about; the Eyes of God are always upon us: And therefore we ſhould always conſider ourſelves as in his Preſence, and under his Inſpection: For we cannot poſſibly go out of his Preſence, nor conceal ourſelves from his Notice, and Obſervation. Becauſe, There is no Place ſo remote and

SERM. XIV. obſcure, no Corner ſo ſecret and retired, as to be out of his Sight. *If we climb up into Heaven, He is there: If we go down to Hell, He is there alſo. If we take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermoſt Parts of the Sea; Even there alſo ſhall his Hand lead us, and his right Hand ſhall hold us. If we ſay, peradventure the Darkneſs ſhall cover us, then ſhall our Night be turned to Day. For the Darkneſs is no Darkneſs with him; but the Night is as clear as the Day; the Darkneſs and Light to him are both alike.* 'Tis in vain therefore to think, That we can conceal our Sins from God: For, to Him all Hearts are open, all Deſires known; and from Him no Secrets can be hid. For he is always *about our Path, aud about our Bed, and ſpieth out all our Ways.* Since then we are always in his Preſence; let us always live, as if we believed ourſelves to be ſo.

Pſa. cxxxix. 2.

It was the Advice of *Seneca*, * to his Friend *Lucilius*; and excellent Advice it was, To pitch upon ſome Perſon of Worth, and to ſet him, as it were, always before his Eyes: That ſo he might always live, as if he were

* Aliquis vir bonus nobis eligendus eſt, ac ſemper ante oculos habendus, ut ſic tanquam illo ſpectante vivamus, & omnia tanquam illo vidente faciamus. *Senecæ Ep.* 11ma.

continually

continually in the Preſence of That Perſon; and do every Thing in ſuch a Manner, as if That Perſon's Eyes were always upon him. SERM. XIV.

Seneca obſerves, * That a great many Sins might be prevented; if the Sinner had only a Perſon at his Elbow, to be a Witneſs of his Crimes, when he was about to commit them. And therefore he recommends it to his Friend, To repreſent to his Mind, any Perſon, whom he reveres; whoſe Authority may help him to ſanctify his Retirements. And to this Purpoſe, he recommends to him *Cato*, *Lælius*, *Ariſtides*; or any Perſon of a venerable Character: One, whoſe Life and Converſation he approved of: And then, repreſenting to himſelf the Countenance of That Perſon, and his Turn of Mind, he deſires his Friend would propoſe him to himſelf conſtantly, either as an Obſerver of his Actions, or elſe as an Example. †

If a Heathen could give ſuch Advice as this; and if the Preſence of ſuch poor frail

* Magna pars peccatorum tollitur, ſi peccaturis teſtis adſiſtat. Aliquem habeat animus, quem vereatur, cujus auctoritate etiam ſecretum ſuum ſanctius faciat. *Idem Ibid.*

† Elige itaque *Catonem*, ſi hic videtur tibi nimis rigidus, elige remiſſioris animi virum *Lælium*, elige eum, cujus tibi placuit, & vita, & oratio: Et ipſius animum ante te ferens & vultus, illum ſemper tibi oſtende, vel cuſtodem, vel exemplum. *Idem Ibid.* Item *Epiſt.* 25.

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Creatures as ourſelves be ſufficient to keep us a little in Awe; and to influence our Behaviour: How much more ought we to *ſet God always before us*; and to be continually influenced by the ſerious Conſideration of his Preſence with us? If we have ſo much Reſpect and Reverence for the Character of a Perſon, who is compaſſed about with Infirmities, as well as ourſelves; as to be afraid of doing any Thing that is indecent before him; or that looks any Way diſreſpectful; or may happen to be diſpleaſing unto him: How much more ſhould we be afraid of committing Sin in the Preſence of the moſt High God, who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Evil?* And how ſhall we dare to affront and provoke him to his Face, as it were; and to inſult the tremendous Majeſty of Heaven and Earth, by committing thoſe Sins in his Preſence, which we ſhould not have the Confidence to commit in the Preſence of our Fellow-Creatures. If the Preſence of a poor little Child would be ſufficient to ſtartle us, and to keep us back from executing a wicked Purpoſe; let us be much more afraid of God's Preſence: For he not only ſees our Behaviour, but is able likewiſe to puniſh it; and will do it in the ſevereſt

vereſt Manner, if we preſume to affront and provoke him. And that we may never be tempted to violate That Reſpect, which is due to his Preſence; let us, as St. *Clement* of *Rome* adviſes, * Seriouſly conſider how near the Lord is unto us; and that none of our Thoughts, and none of our moſt ſecret Imaginations are concealed from him. † For he is a Searcher of our Thoughts and Deſigns: ‡ And all Things are manifeſt and open in his Sight; and Nothing can eſcape his Knowledge. § Seeing therefore that God ſees and hears all Things; let us fear him, and carefully abſtain from all impure Inclinations and Deſires, which naturally lead to wicked Actions: That ſo his Mercy may ſhelter us from the Wrath to come. For where ſhall any of us fly from his Almighty, and avenging Arm? Or, What

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* Ἰδωμεν πῶς ἐγγὺς ἐστιν, καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲν λέληθεν αὐτὸν τῶν ἐνθυμήσεων ἡμῶν, οὐδὲ τῶν διαλογισμῶν ὧν ποιούμεθα. *S. Clementis ad Corinthios Epiſt.* Cap. 21. Ed. *Lond.*

† Ἐρευνητὴς γὰρ ἐστιν ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐνθυμήσεων. *Idem Ibid.*

‡ Πάντα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐστι, καὶ οὐδὲν λέληθεν τὴν βουλὴν αὐτοῦ. *Id. Ib.* Cap. 27.

§ Πάντων οὖν βλεπομένων καὶ ἀκουομένων, φοβηθῶμεν αὐτὸν, καὶ ἀπολείπωμεν φαύλων ἔργων μιαρὰς ἐπιθυμίας, ἵνα τῷ ἐλέει αὐτοῦ σκεπασθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῶν μελλόντων κριμάτων. Πῦ γὰρ τις ἡμῶν δύναται φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς κραταιᾶς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ; ποίῳ δὲ κόσμῳ δέξεται τινα τῶν ἀυλομολούντων ἀπ' αὐτοῦ; Ποῖ ἐν τις ἀπέλθῃ, ἢ πῦ ἀποδράσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐμπεριέχοντος; *Ibid.* Cap. 28.

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World, ſhall receive any one that vainly attempts to fly from him? Where then can any one go, or whither can he fly from Him, who circumſcribes and contains all Things within himſelf. Thus far, and to this Effect, this excellent Father!

And St. *Ignatius* ſays much to the ſame Purpoſe. * Nothing lies hidden, or is concealed from the Lord: But all our moſt ſecret Thoughts lie open, or manifeſt to Him. Let us therefore order all our Actions ſo; as conſidering that He dwelleth in us: That ſo we may be the Temples of the Lord; and that He our God may dwell in us.

And the holy Martyr *Polycarp*, in his Epiſtle to the *Philippians*; after giving ſome Directions to married Women, and to Widows, concerning their Behaviour; ſays thus. † For ye know, that God ſeeth all Things: And there is Nothing hidden from him, No. Not any of your Imaginations; none of your Thoughts; nor any of the

* Οὐδὲν λανθάνει τὸν κύριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ κρυπτὰ ἡμῶν ἐγγὺς αὐτῷ ἐστιν. Πάντα οὖν ποιῶμεν ὡς αὐτὸν ἐν ἡμῖν κατοικοῦντος, ἵνα ὦμεν αὐτοῦ ναοὶ, καὶ αὐτὸς ᾖ ἐν ἡμῖν Θεὸς ἡμῶν. *S. Ignatii ad Epheſios Ep.* Cap. 15. *Ed. Smithi.*

† Γινωσκόσας, ὅτι πάντα ἡμῶν σκωπτεῖται, καὶ λέληθεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲν, οὔτε λογισμῶν, οὔτε ἐννοιῶν, οὔτε τι τῶν κρυπτῶν τῆς καρδίας. Εἰδότες οὖν, ὅτι Θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται, ὀφείλομεν ἀξίως τῆς ἐντολῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ δόξης περιπατεῖν. *S. Polycarpi ad Philippenſes Epiſt.* Cap. 4, 5. *Ed. Smithi.*

greateſt

greateſt Secrets in your Breaſts. Knowing therefore, that God is not to be mocked or deceived, we ought to walk agreeably to his Commands, and ſo as may be moſt for his Glory. SERM. XVI.

And again, after he had given ſome excellent Rules of Life to the Preſbyters of that Church, he enforces the Obſervation of them with this Conſideration. * For, ſays he, We are before the Eyes, or in the Preſence of the Lord our God; and muſt all ſtand before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt: Where every One muſt give an Account of himſelf. Wherefore, let us ſerve him with Fear, and with all Reverence, as he himſelf hath commanded.

In vain then does *the Murderer riſe with the Light*, to *kill the poor and needy, and in the Night is as a Thief.* In vain alſo does *the Eye of the Adulterer wait for the Twilight, and diſguiſing his Face, ſay; No Eye ſhall ſee me.* And in vain do all wicked Men endeavour to conceal their Wickedneſs: For, although they may be able to keep it from the Notice and Obſervation of the World; Job. xxiv. 14. ver. 15.

* Απέναντι γὰρ τῶν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ ἐσμεν ὀφθαλμῶν, καὶ πάντας δεῖ παρασῆναι τῷ βήματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἕκαστον ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ λόγον δοῦναι. Οὕτως οὖν δουλεύσομεν αὐτῷ μετὰ φόβου, καὶ πάσης εὐλαβείας, καθὼς αὐτὸς ἐνετείλατο. *Idem Ibid.* Cap. 6.

Serm. XIV. yet with all their Care they cannot hide it from God: For, as holy *Job* ſpeaks, Even *Hell is naked before him, and Deſtruction hath no Covering.*

Job xxvi. 6. Prov. xv. 11.

Whenever therefore we are tempted to tranſgreſs any of God's Laws; let us conſider, That we are in his Preſence; That his Eyes are always fixed upon us; and That he narrowly watches every Part and Circumſtance of our Behaviour: And That however he may ſeem to wink at us now; yet a Day will moſt certainly come, when he ſhall judge the Secrets of Men's Hearts; when he ſhall bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkneſs, and make manifeſt the Counſels of the Hearts. If then we think it worth our While to approve ourſelves to the Good Opinion and Liking of ſuch frail ſinful Creatures as ourſelves; let us much rather endeavour to approve ourſelves, and our own Hearts unto God. Let us conſider That Infinite Diſtance which there is between God and us; Let us conſider him as our Creator, Preſerver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; That is to ſay, Let us conſider him as the Author and Giver of all thoſe ſtupendous Mercies, which we are bleſſed with in this World; and which we hope, for the Sake of Chriſt,

to

to be made Partakers of in the next. And Serm. XIV.
if all theſe engaging Conſiderations cannot work ſo far upon our Love, and Gratitude; as to reſtrain us from Sin, and to keep us within the Bounds of our Duty to him: Then let us conſider him farther as *a mighty and a terrible God; which regardeth not Perſons, nor taketh Reward.* Deut. x. 17. Let us conſider Him as cloathed with Majeſty and Terror; as arrayed in ſpotleſs Holineſs, and as *of purer Eyes, than to behold* Iniquity, without the utmoſt Abhorrence and Indignation. Let us conſider him farther, as inveſted with Infinite and irreſiſtible Power; and then let us conſider, That this Majeſtick and terrible, this infinitely holy and powerful God is at all Times, and in all Places preſent with us; That his Eyes are always fixed upon us; and That he takes particular Notice of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; and That there is *a Book of Remembrance* kept of them all: I ſay, let us ſeriouſly conſider all this; and then, *Let us be wicked, if we can.* I ſay, *If we can.* For ſurely, the ſerious Belief of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, the frequent and attentive Conſideration, That God is intimately preſent Every-Where; and ſees, and knows, and marks Mal. iii. 16.

every

SERM. XIV.

every Thing we do, and ſay, and think; I ſay, the ſerious Conſideration of all This will render it almoſt impoſſible, if not utterly ſo, for us to be guilty of any wilful and preſumptuous Sins. Of ſuch Uſe and Importance are the Doctrines of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, to reſtrain, and preſerve us from Sin!

But farther, The Belief of theſe Doctrines is the ſtrongeſt Incentive, and moſt powerful Inducement to Sincerity of Heart, and Simplicity of Behaviour. When we conſider, That God is always preſent with us; That He is at all Times privy to our moſt ſecret Thoughts; That He knows our Deſigns, before they are compleatly formed, and the Workings of our Hearts, before they are yet ripened into Reſolution: It will appear to be the greateſt Extremity of Folly and Madneſs, to diſſemble with him; and to hope to deceive him: Becauſe, He *knoweth what is in Man*, and underſtandeth all his Thoughts. Therefore when we pray unto Him, it ſhould be in Sincerity and Truth; and when we *appear before* Him, *in his Holy Temple*, it ſhould be with the utmoſt Reverence and Devotion. For, as *Jacob* ſaid, *Surely the Lord is in this Place. How dread-*

Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.

ful

ful is this Place? This is none other but the House of God, and This is the Gate of Heaven. Therefore, when we preſent ourſelves before the Lord, and put up our humble Petitions unto him; it muſt be with Sincerity of Heart, and Uprightneſs of Intentions. For God is actually preſent with us, and ſees our Hearts; and therefore is not to be *mocked: For whatſoever a Man ſoweth that ſhall he alſo reap.* If we deal ſincerely with him; he will hear our Petitions, and grant our Requeſts, in his own due Time; if they are only fit and proper for us: But if we do *but flatter him with our Mouth; and diſſemble with him in our Tongue*; and if our *Hearts are not whole with him*; He will abhor both us and our Petitions; and puniſh our Hypocriſy in the ſevereſt Manner. It is in vain therefore to diſſemble with him; becauſe He cannot be deceived. And for this Reaſon, 'tis alſo very idle and ſilly, to endeavour to deceive, and impoſe upon the World: To accuſtom ourſelves to act a double Part: To practice upon the Goodneſs of other People, and the Eaſineſs of their Tempers: To make Uſe of a diſguiſed, artificial Behaviour: And to endeavour to paſs for what we are not.

SERM. XIV.

Gal. vi. 7.

Pſa. lxxviii. 36, 37.

To

SERM. XIV.

To what Purpoſe then are all the ſpecious Colourings of the formal Hypocrite? The thin Diſguiſes of the artful, and deſigning? The little Tricks and Artifices of the fraudulent, unfair Dealer? The black, deep-laid Deſigns of the cool, ſteady, thinking Villain? The hollow, inſincere Profeſſions of the falſe Friend? The plauſible, and Sham-Pretenſions of the Mock-Patriot; who wants only to get into Power; that ſo he may make an ill Uſe of it? And the fine Speeches, fair Promiſes, and gracious Aſſurances; and, in ſhort, all the *Cunning Craftineſs* of the obſequious, ſupple, cringing Courtier; *whereby he lies in Wait to deceive* the credulous and unwary; and to ſupplant and undermine all thoſe that ſtand in his Way; and do, as it were, ſeem to *keep him back from* Riches and *Honour?* I ſay, To what Purpoſe are all theſe falſe Appearances, and ſham Profeſſions, and Pretenſions of theſe ſeveral Sorts of Hypocrites; who endeavour to paſs for what they are not? They may poſſibly chance to ſerve ſome preſent Turn: And the Succeſs of ſuch vile Artifices may poſſibly tempt the Perſons that can condeſcend to uſe them; to plume and pique themſelves upon their Addreſs and Skill, in the Management of them.

Eph. iv. 14.

Numb. xxiv. 11.

But

But however ſuch falſe Colourings may happen to paſs upon the World for a While: Yet 'tis ten to one, but the Maſque drops off, ſooner or later; and then they will appear in their proper Colours, equally contemptible and odious. But although they ſhould even impoſe upon the World to the laſt, and never be diſcovered; can they alike impoſe upon God by their falſe Pretences? Becauſe they wilfully hide their Faces from God, and will not ſee him; although he be always preſent with them: Does he for that Reaſon not ſee them? Such an Imagination were as fooliſh and ridiculous, as is the Behaviour of thoſe Children; who through Baſhfulneſs hid their Faces: And, becauſe they can ſee No-Body at ſuch Times; fondly imagine, That No-Body elſe can ſee them. Although they may flouriſh and proſper a While, by the Means of ſuch iniquitous Arts as Theſe: Yet God ſees them and their Doings; and will reward them all according to their Ways. For, as *Zophar* ſaid to *Job*, ſo we may ſay of them; *The triumphing of the Wicked is ſhort, and the Joy of the Hypocrite but for a Moment. Though his Excellency mount up to the Heavens, and his Head reach unto the Clouds:* xx. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

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Yet

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Yet he ſhall periſh for ever, like his own Dung. They which have ſeen him ſhall ſay, Where is he? He ſhall fly away as a Dream, and ſhall not be found: Yea, he ſhall be chaſed away as a Viſion of the Night. The Eye alſo which ſaw him, ſhall ſee him no more; neither ſhall his Place any more behold him. Or, as holy *Job* ſpeaks, *What is the Hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained; when God taketh away his Soul? Will God hear his Cry, when Trouble cometh upon him?*

Job xxvii. 8, 9.

Since then God is preſent Every-Where, and ſees, and knows every Thing: Let us not preſume to diſſemble with him, nor to impoſe upon our Fellow-Creatures: But *putting away Lying*, and all Manner of Diſſimulation, and Hypocriſy, let us *ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour*; and deal with him honeſtly, ſincerely and openly: Becauſe, *we are*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Members one of another*; and becauſe *God trieth our Hearts and Reins.* Therefore, let us *have our Converſation in this World with* true *Simplicity and godly Sincerity.*

Eph. iv. 25.

Pſa. vii. 10.

2 Cor. i. 12.

The next Uſe to be made of theſe Doctrines of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience is, To ſupport our drooping Spirits under the heavy Preſſure of Troubles and Afflictions.

Afflictions. When we conſider, That God is preſent with us; and ſees our Sufferings, and knows all our Wants; we ſhall find abundant Reaſon, to repoſe an intire Truſt and Confidence in him, and his good Providence. When we reflect, That he is always at Hand to help us; and always ready, and willing, to ſuccour and ſupport us; That he wants neither Power, nor Inclination to relieve, to help, and to aſſiſt us; That he knoweth our Neceſſities, before we aſk, and our Ignorance in aſking; That *before we call* upon him, he is ready to *anſwer* us; and *whiles we are yet ſpeaking*, he *hears* us: I ſay, If we conſider all this, it muſt wonderfully raiſe and comfort our fainting Spirits; and prove a more ſovereign Cordial unto them, than any which this vain World can afford. *For if God be for us, who can be againſt us?* However great our Sufferings are; yet if we firmly truſt in him, and rely upon him; he will either deliver us from them, or ſupport us under them. That gracious Being, who conſtantly *watches over* us all *for Good*; will certainly make *all Things work together for Good to them that love* him. His watchful Providence will at all Times guard, and protect us; and ſupport, and

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Iſai. lxv. 24.

Rom. viii. 31.

Jer. xliv. 27. Rom. viii. 28.

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comfort us. For, as St. *Peter* ſays, *The Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Prayers. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of That which is good?* And holy *David* ſays, *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him: Yea, all ſuch as call upon him faithfully. He will fulfil the Deſire of them that fear him: He alſo will hear their Cry, and will help them.*

1 Pet. iii. 12, 13.

Pſa. cxlv. 18, 19.

Since then God is thus preſent Every-Where; and at all Times, ready to hear and aſſiſt us, in all the Troubles and Afflictions of This Life: Let us, in all our Diſtreſſes, have Recourſe unto him; and *in every Thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, make our Requeſts known unto God.*

Phil. iv. 6.

And that our Prayers may *not return unto us void*; Let us, as God directed *Abraham*, *Walk before him, and be perfect.* Or, as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, *upright, or ſincere.* And to this End, let us always endeavour to keep up conſtantly in our Minds, a due Senſe of God's Preſence with us; and a becoming Reverence for it. An awful and a conſtant Senſe of our being continually in his Preſence, and under his Inſpection; will naturally help to make us circumſpect, upright,

Gen. xvii. 1.

right, and ſincere, in every Part of our Carriage and Behaviour. This will be a great Means, to preſerve and ſecure us from the ill Influence of bad Examples; and from the unhappy Effects of evil Company: As it will be a likely Method to prevent, and hinder us from falling into it: Or, if by Chance We ſhould fall in their Way, or They in ours; it will help to preſerve us from *That dangerous Infection which is naturally inſeparable from their evil Communication. And, *if* thoſe *Sinners* ſhould *intice us*; and uſe their Endeavours to corrupt and ſeduce us: Yet the Senſe and Perſuaſion of God's Preſence will keep us always upon our Guard againſt Them, and all their Attempts: And we ſhall be ready to ſay, with holy *Joſeph* in the like Circumſtances, *How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Gen. xxxix. 9.

But in Order to be guarded the more effectually againſt all Temptations of every Sort; we ought to make it our great Buſineſs and Employment to reflect ſeriouſly upon God's continual Preſence with us all; and

* Ἴσθι γὰρ, ὅτι, ἐὰν ὁ ἑταῖρος ᾖ μεμολυσμένος, καὶ τὸν συναναστρεφόμενον αὐτῷ, μολύνεσθαι ἀνάγκη, κἂν αὐτὸς ὢν τύχῃ καθαρός. *Epicteti* Manuale, Cap. 45.

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his intimate Knowledge of all our moſt ſecret Imaginations, Thoughts, Reſolutions, Purpoſes, and Deſigns. And the Way to do this effectually is, To keep up a continual Intercourſe and Correſpondence with Him; by praying frequently unto Him, and reading his Word: And by often meditating upon the Perfections of the Divine Nature, and particularly his Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, his conſummate Purity and Holineſs, and his inflexible Juſtice; which will not ſuffer him to behold Iniquity, without the utmoſt Abhorrence and Indignation. By this Means we ſhall truely *ſet God always before us*; we ſhall walk continually as in his Preſence; and whilſt we keep him, as it were, conſtantly within View; we ſhall never loſe Sight of our Duty to him: But we ſhall, by the Help of his Grace, and with his Bleſſing upon our weak Endeavours, *have our Converſation in Heaven*, even whilſt we continue here upon Earth: And ſo far as the Infirmity of our Nature will permit, *walk before him, and be perfect.* Which that we all may be, let us now put up our moſt humble Petitions to the Throne of Grace, in the Words of the excellent Liturgy of our Church.

Almighty

Almighty God, unto whom all Hearts be open, all Deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; cleanſe the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inſpiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name through Chriſt our Lord. To whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all Honour, Glory, Worſhip, and Dominion, now and for ever-more. Amen. SERM. XIV.

The unequal Diſpenſations of Providence accounted for, and vindicated.

MATTHEW v. 45.

---He maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.

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THESE Words give us a ſhort, but beautiful Deſcription of God's Dealings with the Children of Men. No Philoſopher could poſſibly have expreſſed himſelf with greater Propriety, with more Energy; and, at the ſame Time, with a more noble Simplicity of Speech than our Bleſſed Saviour has done upon this Occaſion. Heat and Moiſture are known to be the two Natural Cauſes of Vegetation: And for this Reaſon they are, with a peculiar Beauty and Force, here put to ſignify all the Comforts and Conveniencies of This Life. Agreeably hereunto the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Thou viſiteſt the Earth,* Pſa. lxv. *and* 9. 11. 12.

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and bleſſeſt it: Thou makeſt it very plenteous. Thou watereſt her Furrows, thou ſendeſt Rain into the little Vallies thereof. Thou makeſt it ſoft with the Drops of Rain, and bleſſeſt the Increaſe of it. Thou crowneſt the Year with thy Goodneſs: And thy Clouds drop Fatneſs.

Great and manifold are thoſe Bleſſings, which God freely beſtows upon all his Creatures. He *openeth his Hand: And filleth all Things living with Plenteouſneſs.* And, however ſtrange it may ſeem at firſt Sight, not only the Good and Virtuous partake of his Bounty; but the Wicked and Ungodly come in alike for a Share of it. For, as it is expreſſed in St. *Luke*, *He is kind unto the Unthankful, and to the Evil.* Or, as it is in the Words of my Text, *He maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.*

Pſa. cxlv. 16.

vi. 35.

As *Epictetus* does very juſtly obſerve,* The moſt eſſential Part of Piety towards the Supreme Being, is, To entertain worthy Apprehenſions of the Divine Nature; and to believe not only, That God exiſts, but That He does likewiſe adminiſter all Things wiſely, juſtly, and well.

* Τῆς περὶ τὸν Θεὸν εὐσεβείας, ἴσθι ὅτι τὸ κυριώτατόν ἐστιν, ὀρθὰς ὑπολήψεις περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχειν, ὡς ὄντων, καὶ διοικούντων τὰ ὅλα κάλλει καὶ δικαίως. *Epicteti* Manuale. Cap. 28. Ed. *Simpſoni*.

In

In Order, therefore, that I may account for this ſeeming Irregularity in the Moral World, and at the ſame Time vindicate the Juſtice of God's Diſpenſations, I ſhall in my enſuing Diſcourſe lay before you, SERM. XV.

First, I.

The apparent, and the probable Reaſons of this unequal Diſtribution of Things.

And Secondly, II.

I ſhall point out thoſe Moral Conſequences, which theſe Reaſons do naturally ſuggeſt unto us.

And I.

I ſhall lay before you the apparent, and the probable Reaſons of this unequal Diſtribution of Things.

A great many good Men have been not a little puzzled to account for the Afflictions of the Godly, and the Proſperity of the Wicked in this Life. Whilſt they confined their Thoughts only to this preſent State of Things; they were at a Loſs to reconcile ſuch an unequal Diſtribution of worldly Bleſſings with the Belief of God's Providence. They could not eaſily conceive, how a juſt and good God could poſſibly permit the Wicked to flouriſh, and proſper; at the ſame Time that he ſuffered his faithful Servants to fall into a great

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Variety of Trouble and Affliction. They thought it would be more for the Honour of God, and the Intereſts of Religion; That Men ſhould be treated here in this World, according to their Deſerts; and that a wide Difference, and a manifeſt Diſtinction ſhould be made between thoſe that ſerved God, and thoſe that ſerved him not. But however fitting and proper ſuch a Scheme of Providence may ſeem in our Eyes; yet the Wiſdom of God has not thought ſo. *For* his *Thoughts are not* our *Thoughts, neither are* our *Ways* his *Ways. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo are* his *Ways higher than* our *Ways, and* his *Thoughts than* our *Thoughts.*

Iſai. lv. 8, 9.

If therefore we would form a right Judgment of the Matter, we muſt take a diſtinct View of the whole Scheme of God's Providence: And to this End, we muſt conſider Man, not only in his preſent State of Exiſtence here in this World; but we muſt likewiſe conſider him as a Creature, that is to exiſt hereafter in another World. If indeed our Beings were to end with our Lives; then it muſt be owned, it would be impoſſible to juſtify the unequal Diſtributions of the good Things of this World. Then

we

we ſhould have ſufficient Reaſon to be *grieved at the Wicked*, when we *do ſee the Ungodly in ſuch Proſperity*. For at preſent they ſeem to be *in no Peril of Death, but are luſty and ſtrong. They come in no Misfortune like other Folk: Neither are they plagued like other Men. Lo! Theſe are the Ungodly, Theſe proſper in the World, and Theſe have Riches in Poſſeſſion. If* therefore *in This Life only we had Hope in* God; we ſhould be ſometimes, and in ſome Circumſtances, *of all Men moſt miſerable*: And we ſhould, with the Pſalmiſt, have too much Reaſon to complain, That we *had cleanſed our Hearts in vain, and waſhed our Hands in Innocency.*

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Pſa. lxxiii. 3, 4, 5. ver. 12.

But however *hard it is* for us, to *underſtand* the Reaſons of ſuch a Procedure upon this Suppoſition: Yet if we go with holy *David into the Sanctuary of God*, and there take a View of the Rewards and Puniſhments of the next Life; we ſhall ſoon *underſtand the End of theſe Men.* Then we ſhall find, that however proſperous they may appear for a While; however flouriſhing and deſirable their preſent Condition may ſeem to be; yet they ſhall certainly one Time or other, and that perhaps when they leaſt think

ver. 16.

of

SERM. XV. of it, *Suddenly conſume, periſh, and come to a fearful End.*

ver. 18. If therefore, inſtead of confining our Thoughts to the narrow Limits of this Life; we would carry our Views beyond it, and look forward into the next; then we ſhould

xxxvii. 6. ſee and acknowledge, That the *Righteouſneſs* of God is *as clear as the Light, and* his *juſt Dealing as the Noon-Day.* This Life therefore ought always to be conſidered by us as a State of Probation, or Trial; and the next as a State of Rewards and Puniſhments. Now before Men can be truely capable of being either rewarded or puniſhed; it is in the firſt Place neceſſary that they ſhould be ſufficiently and throughly tried: And in Order to ſuch a Trial, it is likewiſe neceſſary, that they ſhould be free and uncontrouled in all their Actions: That is, that they ſhould have it in their Power, and at their own free Choice, either to do well, or to do ill. For unleſs they are thus left intirely at their own Liberty, it cannot be ſuppoſed; that they have ſufficient and proper Opportunities of diſcovering, and manifeſting their genuine Diſpoſitions and Inclinations. If Men were always kept under a viſible Check and Reſtraint, then they would not have it in their

Power

Power to manifeſt their Obedience to God's Will, or their Diſobedience to it. If the Supreme Being were to ſtep in upon every Occaſion; and to reward, or to puniſh, every Inſtance of Duty, and every Breach of Duty; his Creatures would in ſuch a Caſe be too much influenced in their Behaviour: Their Obedience then, as being altogether involuntary and conſtrained, would have Nothing in it worthy of the Favour and Approbation of ſuch a wiſe and good Being, as God is. And the Liberty of their Wills being thus taken away; or, which is the ſame Thing in Effect, ſo powerfully counteracted and over-ruled, the very Nature of Virtue and Vice would be utterly deſtroyed; and together with it, all Capacity of Rewards and Puniſhments would intirely ceaſe. Upon ſuch a Footing of Things, their Submiſſion to God's Will, as proceeding from a ſervile Principle of Fear, or elſe from a ſordid mercenary View of Intereſt only, could not recommend them to God's Notice and Acceptance: (I ſpeak here of the Natural State of Man, and what he was in his Original Formation, before the Fall; and not of that Præternatural State, into which Sin has brought him: Becauſe the preſent Argument SERM. XV.

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is founded upon the Original Conſtitution of Things.) I ſay, ſuch a Submiſſion to God's Will, as is grounded upon no better Motives than a ſervile Principle of Fear, or a mercenary View of Intereſt; without any Mixture of the Love of God, for his own Sake; and of a filial Reverence for him, and Fear of offending him; and without any ſincere Regard for his Honour, and the Authority of his Laws: Such a forced Submiſſion as This is, as it is in its own Nature, neceſſarily precarious and uncertain in its Continuance; and not likely to laſt any longer than thoſe Reſtraints remain; ſo it cannot poſſibly recommend us to the Favour and Acceptance of ſuch a wiſe and good, ſuch a pure and holy, and juſt a Being, as God is.

Upon theſe Accounts therefore it was abſolutely neceſſary in the Nature of the Thing; that Man ſhould be created a Free-Agent: And for theſe Reaſons God has placed us all here in this World; where we have abundant Opportunities given us of manifeſting and ſhewing forth our Obedience to God's Laws, or elſe our Diſobedience to them; That ſo we may be either rewarded, or puniſhed accordingly in the next World.

And,

And, ſince this is the Caſe, it follows very plainly from hence, That we muſt be left intirely at Liberty to make this Trial; we muſt have the Means and Opportunities given us, and the neceſſary Occaſions put into our Power, either of doing well, or ill: That ſo by an uniform, regular Courſe of Behaviour, we may ſhew an unfeigned and ſettled Obedience to the Will of God; or elſe, by an obſtinate and wilful Continuance in vicious Habits, and by a daily and conſtant Neglect of our Duty to God, and our Neighbour, we may manifeſt and make appear a confirmed and inveterate Oppoſition to the Will of God, a ſettled and laſting Contempt of his Authority, and an irreclaimable and incorrigible Diſpoſition of Mind. I ſay, To this End, and for this Purpoſe, has God ſent us into this World. And accordingly we have it, all of us, in our Power, to give the ſtrongeſt and moſt convincing Proofs of a ſincere Diſpoſition, and a fixed unalterable Reſolution, to do the Will of God to the beſt of our Power: And we have it likewiſe in our Power; if we are but wicked enough to make a wrong Uſe of that Power, to ſhew a ſettled Diſregard for God and Religion, and a laſting Contempt for the Honour SERM. XV.

and

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and Authority of his Laws. And in Order that we may have abundant Room and Opportunity for making this Grand and Important Experiment, God has placed us here upon the great Stage of this World; where we are left intirely to our own Liberty to act, and to live as we pleaſe.

For this Reaſon therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary, that the Godly and the Wicked ſhould be ſuffered to enjoy in common the Bleſſings of Life, without any great and remarkable Diſtinction. Therefore it would be as much out of the Way, to ſuppoſe that God ſhould at every Turn, and upon every Occaſion, make a manifeſt Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked here in this World; as it would be to expect, that he ſhould try us over and over again in the next World, which he has declared to be the Place for Judgment. One State of Things therefore is not to be jumbled and confounded with the other: And conſequently the State of Rewards and Puniſhments cannot poſſibly take Place, in the Nature of Things; till ſuch Time as this State of Trial or Probation is at an End. Whenever this State comes to an End, our Trial will have an End likewiſe; and we ſhall be

be tried no longer: And whenever the next State of Things takes Place in its Turn; then, but not till then, will God *enter into Judgment with* his Creatures, and *render to every Man according to his Deeds.* SERM. XV. Pſa. cxliii. 2. Rom. ii. 6.

But in the mean While, * the World goes on, the Heavenly Bodies all go their ſeveral appointed Rounds, the Day and the Night take their Turns, the Seaſons of the Year ſucceed one another, in a regular orderly Courſe; the Earth brings forth her Fruits, one Kind after another, in its reſpective Seaſon: And all This for the Uſe and Convenience of Man, and for the Support and Com-

* Si conſideret aliquis univerſam Mundi adminiſtrationem intelliget profecto, quam vera ſit ſententia Stoicorum, qui aiunt, noſtrâ causâ Mundum eſſe conſtructum. Omnia enim, quibus conſtat, quæque generat ex ſe Mundus, ad utilitatem ſolius Hominis accommodata ſunt.——Sol irrequietis curſibus, et ſpatiis inæqualibus orbes annuos conficit; et aut oriens diem promit ad laborem, aut occidens noctem ſuperducit ad requiem; et tum abſceſſu longius ad meridiem, tum acceſſu propius ad ſeptentrionem, hyemis, et æſtatis viciſſitudines facit. ——Luna quoque nocturni temporis gubernatrix, et amiſſi, ac recépti luminis vicibus menſtrua ſpatia moderatur; et cæcas tenebris horrentibus noctes fulgore ſuæ claritatis illuſtrat.——Aſtra etiam cætera vel ortu, vel occaſu ſuo certis ſtationibus opportunitates temporum ſubminiſtrant. Sed et navigiis, quo minus errabundo curſu per immenſum vagentur, regimen præbent, cum ea rite gubernator obſervans, ad portum deſtinati litoris provehamur. (provebatur.) Ventorum ſpiritu attrahuntur nubes, ut ſata imbribus irrigentur, ut vites fœtibus, arbuſta pomis exuberent. Et hæc per orbem vicibus exhibentur, ne deſit aliquando, quo vita Hominum ſuſtineatur. *Lactantii De Irâ Dei Liber.* Cap. 13. Ed. *Cantab.*

fort

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fort of his Life. And we are placed here in this great Garden of the World, as our Firſt Parents were in Paradiſe, to make Trial of our Obedience to God's Will. We may like them, if we pleaſe, reach forth our Hand, and take of the forbidden Fruit. It is, like the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, put in our Power, and within our Reach: For God's Deſign is to try us throughly, whether we will be obedient to his Will, or not. And for this Reaſon, God does not immediately interpoſe upon every Inſtance of Diſobedience, or Breach of Duty. For although the Obedience of our Firſt Parents was to be tried by one ſingle Act: Inaſmuch as they were created in a State of Perfection, and had a natural Propenſion to Virtue and Obedience, without any the leaſt Inclination to Evil: Yet, conſidering the preſent weak Condition of Human Nature, and that unhappy Biaſs and Propenſion to Evil, which their fatal Tranſgreſſion has entailed upon all the Intellectual and Moral Faculties of all their Poſterity: I ſay, God graciouſly conſidering all This, has in his great Mercy and Goodneſs, wiſely proportioned the Nature and the Term of our Trial or Approbation to the Condition and Degree

of

of our Strength. And therefore in This especially do the great Wisdom and Goodness, and wonderful Mercy and Long-suffering of God most eminently appear: That we are not to be tried by one single Act, as they were; but our Time of Trial, or Probation, lasts as long as ever our Lives last. And therefore God does not hastily *enter into Judgment with* us, upon every Offence; as if he wanted to take all Advantages against us, and only sought our Ruin and Destruction. No. He is, on the contrary, what He *proclaimed* himself to *Moses*, *The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; Keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression and Sin, and that will by no Means clear the Guilty.* And as God *changes not*, but is always *the same, Yesterday, To-Day, and for ever*, as our Blessed Saviour is said to be in the New Testament: Therefore alone it is, That we are *not consumed in all our Sins.* For this Reason God affords us Time and Leisure, to reflect upon what we have done, to repent of our Miscarriages, and to return to our Duty. And to this End, He kindly grants us the whole Term of our Lives to make this Trial in. And therefore

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Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Numb. xiv. 18. Mal. iii. 6 Heb. xiii. 8.

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ſo long as this Time of Trial laſts, it is not reaſonable to expect, That God ſhould always make a manifeſt and a due Diſtinction between the Righteous and the Wicked. Some Difference indeed there is, and ſhould be made ſometimes, for the greater Encouragement of Religion and Virtue; and the better Manifeſtation of the Divine Providence: But to imagine, That God ſhould at every Turn exert his Power, and make his Arm bare, is unreaſonable and abſurd; quite beneath the Dignity and Majeſty of the Supreme Being; and utterly inconſiſtent with the very Notion of a State of Trial, or Probation. For this Reaſon, as I obſerved before, it is abſolutely neceſſary in the Nature of Things, That the Wicked ſhould be ſuffered to enjoy, if they can be truely ſaid to enjoy, the Bleſſings of this Life as well as the Godly: Becauſe, without ſuch a Permiſſion, they could not be ſufficiently and throughly tried: And if ſo, then conſequently the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God could not be ſo abundantly manifeſted in the Final Retribution of Rewards and Puniſhments, as it will, and muſt neceſſarily be, after a long and oft repeated Trial. Therefore it is highly proper and neceſſary, That the Tares ſhould enjoy

enjoy the Benefit of Sun-Shine and Rain, as well as the Wheat; and that both ſhould grow up together until the Harveſt. Then, and not till then, will be the proper Time, to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh the one from the other: When it may be done with moſt Safety, and with leaſt Prejudice to the Wheat. They who are now, like the Tares amongſt the Wheat, worthleſs and unprofitable under all the Means of Grace; and notwithſtanding all the kindly Influence of God's Bleſſings; may ſtill, by the Means of his preventing and aſſiſting Grace, one Time or other, before they die, repent them truely of their former Sins; and may at laſt, through God's Mercies in Chriſt, *be found of him in Peace, without Spot and blameleſs.* What Pity therefore would it be, that they who might in Length of Time become capable of God's Favour, ſhould, for Want of being tried perhaps a little longer, be rooted up before the Harveſt, and caſt into the Fire? But this is far, very far from being the Caſe with any of us. God gives us all poſſible Means and Opportunities of becoming good and virtuous: * And therefore he

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2 Pet. iii. 14.

* As a great and maſterly Writer obſerves, 'The chief 'Act and Deſign of Goodneſs, is the making us truely good;

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he tries all his Creatures fully and throughly, before he removes them out of this World into the next. So long as they are capable of becoming good; ſo long we may reaſonably preſume, God's Goodneſs will diſpoſe him to try them, and to furniſh them with proper Means and Opportunities of being ſo: Or elſe, of teſtifying a contrary Diſpoſition, and of ſtrengthening themſelves in their Wickedneſs. But when they are once hardened to ſuch a Degree, as to be no longer capable of being wrought upon by Moral Motives; and of being recovered to a right Mind and Diſpoſition, and a proper Senſe of Things: Then there is no longer any Room left for Mercy, becauſe they are no longer in a Capacity of becoming good: And being

'and when any Perſon falls below that Poſſibility, he is no 'more the Object of Pity or Pardon; becauſe he is no more 'capable of becoming good. Pardon is offered on Deſign 'to make us really good. *And therefore*, 'Tis not a Limi- 'tation of the Divine Goodneſs to ſay, that ſome Men, and 'ſome States are beyond it; no more than it is a Limitation 'of his Power, to ſay, that he cannot ſin, or cannot do Im- 'poſſibilities: For a Goodneſs towards Perſons not capable 'of becoming good, is a Goodneſs that does not agree with 'the Infinite Purity and Holineſs of God. It is ſuch a 'Goodneſs, as if it were propoſed to the World, it would 'encourage Men to live in Sin, and to think that a few Acts 'of Homage offered to God, perhaps in our laſt Extremities, 'could ſo far pleaſe him, as to bribe and corrupt him.' *Bp.* Burnet *on the Firſt Article.* P. 29, 30.

thus

thus fallen below all Poſſibility of Goodneſs, they muſt be neceſſarily precluded from all Poſſibility of Mercy. For Mercy being tendered to all, only as a Means to bring them to Virtue and Goodneſs: When, through a Moral Incapacity, This End is no longer attainable; the Means cannot poſſibly be afforded any longer: Becauſe, it is inconſiſtent with the Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, to make Uſe of any Means, when no wiſe or good End can poſſibly be anſwered by them. SERM. XV.

Whenever therefore we ſee impenitent Sinners cut off in the Prime of Life; it may poſſibly be: Becauſe they are of a ſtubborn, incorrigible Diſpoſition, which would only incline them to ſwell the Meaſure of their Guilt, and to increaſe the Degree of their Puniſhment. And therefore it is poſſible, That God may, in the Midſt of Judgment, think on Mercy: And, * to this End, remove them ſomewhat earlier to a ſmaller

* A good Writer of the laſt Age ſays to this Purpoſe, in Vindication of the Burial Service, 'Tis in great Mercy that 'God has taken to himſelf any wicked Man, to judge him 'equitably himſelf, and not leaving him to the Devil's Plea-'ſure. And 2dly, preventing him from increaſing his Tor-'ment by longer Continuance in Sin.' *Evangelical and Catholick Unity maintained in the Church of* England. *By* William Saywell, *D. D.* P. 166.

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Degree of Puniſhment; in Order to prevent them from increaſing their Guilt, and thereby running into a greater. For our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf aſſures us, That there are Degrees of Puniſhment, which ſhall be proportioned to the Meaſure and Degree of Guilt; That ſome Perſons *ſhall be beaten with many*, and ſome *with few Stripes*; and *That it ſhall be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment* for ſome Perſons than for others.

Luke xii. 47, 48. Matt. x. 15.

But however this be; for I will not preſume to determine any Thing in ſo nice a a Point; where Reaſon fails us, and where the Holy Scriptures are ſilent: Yet This One Thing is ſure and certain; That ſo long as we are ſuffered to continue here in This World, the common Bleſſings of Life will be diſpenſed to all Men, without any great and remarkable Difference. For, as the wiſe Man obſerves, *No Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before him. All Things come alike to all, there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; to the Good and to the Clean, and to the Unclean; to him that ſacrificeth, and to him that ſacrificeth not: As is the Good, ſo is the Sinner; and he that ſweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.*

Eccleſ. ix. 1, 2.

It

It is not conſiſtent with God's Wiſdom, SERM. to unſettle the whole Courſe of Nature; and XV. to work a Miracle at every Turn, to reward the Obedience, and to puniſh the Diſobedience of his Creatures here in this World. And for this Reaſon, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *God hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs.* But in the mean While Men are permitted to *walk in the Ways of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes.* 'Till that Time comes, God is pleaſed to *make his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good; and* to *ſend Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.* But then as for thoſe who abuſe the Bleſſings of God; although they *live, become old,* and *are Mighty in Power*; Although *their Seed is eſtabliſhed in their Sight with them, and their Offſpring before their Eyes*; Although *their Houſes are ſafe from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them*; Although *they ſpend their Days in Wealth, and in a Moment go down to the Grave,* without any remarkable Deſtruction, and ſeemingly in Peace: Yet, as holy *Job* obſerves, All thoſe *wicked* Perſons *are reſerved to the Day of Deſtruction*; when *they ſhall be brought forth to the Day of Wrath.*

Acts xvii. 31.

Eccleſ. xi. 9.

Job. xxi. 7, 8, 9. 13.

ver. 30.

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This then is the apparent, and the Principal Reaſon of the unequal Diſtribution of worldly Bleſſings.

And I ought now to proceed farther, To lay before you Thoſe Other probable Reaſons, which may be aſſigned for the unequal Diſpenſations of Divine Providence.

But the preſent Time not admitting of This; it muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now, To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

The unequal Diſpenſations of Providence accounted for, and vindicated.

MATTHEW v. 45.

---He maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I proposed, SERM. XVI.

I.

To lay before you the apparent, and the probable Reaſons of the Unequal Diſpenſations of Providence Here in This World.

And

II.

To point out Thoſe Moral Conſequences, which Theſe Reaſons do naturally ſuggeſt unto us.

And in ſpeaking to the Firſt of theſe Heads I have already obſerved, That the apparent, and the Principal Reaſon of This unequal Diſtribution of worldly Bleſſings is,

That

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That This Life is deſigned as a State of Trial or Probation, in Order to qualify and prepare us for another, which is to ſucceed it: And That for this Reaſon, an impartial Retribution of Rewards and Puniſhments cannot take Place in the Nature of Things, till ſuch Time as This State of Trial comes to an End: And That until This Time comes about, God judges it fit and neceſſary to *make his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good; and to ſend his Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.*

And I now proceed in the next Place, To aſſign Thoſe Other probable Reaſons, which may be alledged in Defence of this ſeeming Inequality in the Diſpenſations of Divine Providence.

The next Reaſon which may probably be aſſigned for the Unequal Diſpenſations of Divine Providence is, That where Men make the Pleaſures, and the Advantages of This Life their Choice, God is pleaſed to let them enjoy it. Without ſuch a Permiſſion, Men could not be ſufficiently and throughly tried: And therefore it is neceſſary, That they ſhould be left at full Liberty, to make Uſe of unrighteous Means, in Order to compaſs wicked Ends: And 'tis neceſſary likewiſe, That Providence ſhould frequently ſuffer them

them to be unhappily ſucceſsful in their De- SERM.
ſigns and Undertakings; That ſo they may XVI.
not go to Hell for Nothing, nor be damned
without Reaſon. If therefore Men will be
ſo wretchedly fooliſh as to *ſpend their Money* Iſai. lv. 2.
for That which is not Bread, and their Labour
for That which ſatisfieth not; it is but juſt
that God ſhould let them *eat of the Fruit of* Prov. i.
their own Way, and be filled with their own 31.
Devices. He hath *ſet before them Life and* Deut.
Death, Bleſſing and Curſing: And they may xxx. 19.
put forth their Hand to whether they will.
The Juſtice and the Goodneſs of God, in
the Final Retribution of Rewards and Puniſh-
ments, cannot poſſibly appear to greater Ad-
vantage; than it will in That Infinite Diſ-
proportion which there is between the
Things of this Life, and the Things above:
And in the exact Diſpenſation of the latter,
in Proportion to the good or the bad Uſe
which we have made of the former. When
Men ſhall, for a great Number of Years to-
gether, have indulged themſelves freely in
the ſinful Gratification of their Luſts and
Paſſions; and have found at laſt by ſad Expe-
rience, that *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spi-* Eccleſ. i.
rit: Then ſhall They themſelves be too firmly 14.
convinced of the deſperate Folly of that Choice

they

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they have made; and then ſhall themſelves, wicked as they are, be forced to acknowledge, That *God is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* Before then ſuch Perſons can *fill up the Meaſure of their Iniquities*, and be ripe for Vengeance; and conſequently before the Juſtice of God can be finally and fully manifeſted at the laſt Day: It is neceſſary that He ſhould frequently permit Injuſtice and Oppreſſion to thrive, and proſper for a While: From whence it will neceſſarily follow, That the Godly muſt, and will often ſuffer, and the Wicked as often grow rich, and flouriſh. And this brings me to the next Reaſon which may be offered for this ſeeming Irregularity in the Moral World; and That is

Pſa. cxlv. 17.

Matt. xxiii. 32. Gen. xv. 16.

That, however conſiderable the Advantages, or the Diſadvantages of our preſent State may ſeem to be: Yet they are perfectly ſmall and trifling, when they are compared to the Joys of Heaven, and the Miſeries of Hell. As St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *I reckon that the Sufferings of this preſent Life are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* There is not the leaſt Shadow of Proportion between the One, and the Other: And therefore God may, very conſiſtently

Rom. viii. 18.

ſiſtently with his Juſtice and Goodneſs, permit the Righteous to ſuffer, and the Wicked to flouriſh and proſper Here, in This World: Becauſe He can, and will, in the next World, make the former ample Amends for all that he has ſuffered; and puniſh the latter with the greateſt Rigour, for his ungrateful Abuſe of His Bleſſings. Therefore the real Happineſs and Miſery of Men are not to be eſtimated by the preſent Appearances of Things, but by the Final Iſſue and Event of them. That which now paſſes under the gawdy Colour of Happineſs, or the wretched Appearance of Miſery, may upon the Whole, and in the long Run, turn out quite differently from what it now appears to be. If then a Thing does but end well at laſt, 'tis unreaſonable to carp at the Conduct and Management of it: For if it be but brought to a happy Iſſue, what can we reaſonably wiſh for more? And on the other Hand, what wiſe Man would chuſe to catch at the Bait of Pleaſure, if he were ſure that a Hook lay concealed under it: Or who would wiſh to eat *the Bread of Deceit*, how *ſweet* ſoever it may ſeem at preſent; if *his Mouth ſhall afterwards be filled with Gravel*?

Prov. xx. 17.

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But farther, Another Reaſon why there is ſuch an Unequal Diſtribution of the Good Things of This Life is, That it is a neceſſary Conſequence of the eſtabliſhed Order of Nature. God has put the whole Syſtem of the Univerſe into a regular orderly Courſe; and there is a long Chain of Cauſes and Effects: Inſomuch that whilſt Things are left to themſelves, as it were; ſuch and ſuch Events will neceſſarily follow: * And although we believe, That the Good Providence of God does, and will interpoſe upon ſpecial Occaſions; when any great and weighty Emergencies do really require ſuch an Interpoſition: Yet in the ordinary Courſe of Things, it is not to be ſuppoſed, That God ſhould, as I may ſay, unhinge the whole Syſtem of the Univerſe, and put the very *Foundations of the Earth out of Courſe*, upon every ſlight and trifling Occaſion.

Pſa. lxxxii. 5

* *Cicero* ſays, *If a Hurricane deſtroys the Crops of Corn, or the Vineyards of any Perſons; or if they are by any Accident deprived of any of their Poſſeſſions; we muſt not conclude from hence, that they are either hated by the Gods, or neglected by them. Becauſe the Gods take Care of greater Matters; but ſmaller ones are beneath their Inſpection.* Nec, ſi ſegetibus, aut vinetis cujuſpiam tempeſtas nocuerit, aut ſi quid e vitæ commodis caſus abſtulerit, eum, cui quid horum acciderit, aut inviſum Deo, aut neglectum à Deo judicemus. *Magna Dii curant, parva negligunt.* De Nat. Deor. Lib. 2. *in Fine.*

Therefore

Therefore ſo long as the Laws of Nature are ſuffered to work their uſual Effects: That is to ſay, ſo long as God is pleaſed to confine the Exerciſe of his Providence to General Rules, and Eſtabliſhed Laws; which are not to be ſuperſeded, and departed from, without ſome very great and ſpecial Reaſons: It muſt and will very frequently happen, that the Righteous and the Wicked ſhall fare alike. Thus, as St. *Cyprian* inſtances, * When the Earth yields her Fruits but ſparingly, the Famine diſtreſſes all without Diſtinction: When a City is taken by Surpriſe, the Inhabitants are all alike led into Captivity: When *the Clouds drop* no *Water* on the Earth, and *rain no Rain upon it*, the Drought parches up all alike: When the Ship is daſhed to Pieces againſt the Rocks, all that are on board her muſt *ſuffer Shipwreck*, without Exception. The Diſorders of the Eyes, the Violence of Fevers, and all other Diſtempers of

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Judges v. 4. Iſai. v. 6.

* Sic cum fœtu ſterili terra jejuna eſt, neminem fames ſeparat: Sic cum irruptione hoſtili civitas aliqua poſſeſſa eſt, omnes ſimul captivitas vaſtat. Et quando imbrem nubila ſerena ſuſpendunt, omnibus ſiccitas una eſt. Et cum navem ſcopuloſa ſaxa conſtringunt (confringunt) navigantibus naufragium ſine exceptione commune eſt. Et occulorum dolor, et impetus febrium et omnium valetudo membrorum cum cæteris communis eſt nobis, quamdiu portatur in ſeculo caro iſta communis. *S. Cæc. Cypriani Opera. De Mortal.* P. 159. Ed. *Ox.*

every

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every Sort are alike incident to us Chriſtians, as well as to others, and will be ſo, as long as we partake of the ſame common Nature with them.

It muſt be owned indeed, That where the common Chances and Accidents of Life, as they are called, have a cloſe and neceſſary Connection with, and Relation to our Moral Character; where our ſpiritual Condition is likely to be either furthered, or hindered, by our outward Circumſtances; where we are likely to become either better, or worſe Men, by That which befals us from without: There we may reaſonably preſume, That God does, and always will interpoſe in the Behalf of his faithful Servants: There we may conclude, That God will ſo order and diſpoſe all Things for the beſt, as that the General Laws of Nature ſhall, without having any Violence or Interruption offered to them, work together for Good to thoſe that love him.

Another Reaſon for the unequal Diſtributions of Providence is, * That Misfortunes and

As a worthy Prelate ſpeaks,

* In the natural Courſe of Things, Happineſs and Miſery appear to be diſtributed by other Rules, than only the perſonal Merit and Demerit of Characters. They may ſometimes be diſtributed

and Afflictions are frequently ſent upon Peo- SERM. ple in the Way of Diſcipline. They may XVI. be ſent upon us, either as an Exerciſe or Trial of our Patience; or elſe for the Correction of our Faults, and to purge out of us all Remains of the old Leaven of Sin; which may lurk in us, and call for ſome ſuch ſevere Methods of Cure: Or elſe perhaps to help us, to wean and draw off our Affections from the trifling Concerns of this World: Or elſe it is poſſible that God may be pleaſed to viſit the Sins of our Fore-Fa-

diſtributed by Way of mere Diſcipline. There may be the wiſeſt and beſt Reaſons, why the World ſhould be governed by General Laws, from whence ſuch promiſcuous Diſtribution perhaps muſt follow; and alſo why our Happineſs and Miſery ſhould be put in each others Power, in the Degree which they are. And theſe Things, as in general they contribute to the rewarding Virtue and puniſhing Vice: So they often contribute alſo, not to the Inverſion of this, which is impoſſible; but to the rendering Perſons proſperous, tho' wicked; afflicted, tho' righteous; and, which is worſe, to the *rewarding ſome Actions*, tho' vicious; and *puniſhing other Actions*, tho' virtuous. But all this cannot drown the Voice of Nature in the Conduct of Providence, plainly declaring itſelf for Virtue, by Way of Diſtinction from Vice, and Preference to it, *&c.*

Again, Good and bad Men would be much more rewarded and puniſhed as ſuch, were it not that Juſtice is often artificially eluded, that Characters are not known, and many who would thus favour Virtue, and diſcourage Vice, are hindered from doing ſo by accidental Cauſes. Butler's *Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Conſtitution and Courſe of Nature*. Part 1. Chap. 3. S. 4, 5. See alſo *Bp.* Browne's *Procedure*, &c. P. 460. *Item Clem. Rom. ad Cor. Ep.* P. 50.

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thers upon us; and to puniſh us in our Fortunes, and our Families; which it is poſſible that They may have raiſed and aggrandized by ſome iniquitous and unjuſtifiable Means. This, it is to be feared, is too much, and too often the Caſe of thoſe Perſons, whoſe Hearts are more ſet upon this World, than upon the next. For, as *Solomon* ſays, *He that maketh Haſte to be rich, ſhall not be innocent.* And *He that haſteth to be rich, hath an evil Eye, and conſidereth not that Poverty ſhall come upon him.* God himſelf hath by his Prophet denounced an *Wo to him that coveteth an evil Covetouſneſs to his Houſe, that he may ſet his Neſt on high, that he may be delivered from the Power of Evil.* And then he tells us, that ſuch a Man *hath conſulted Shame to his Houſe.* That is, by entailing a Curſe upon his Family, which ſhall ſurely take Place ſooner or later. *For the Stone ſhall cry out of the Wall, and the Beam out of the Timber ſhall anſwer it.* The Holineſs and the Juſtice of God will oblige him to teſtify his Diſpleaſure againſt ſuch oppreſſive, injurious, and iniquitous Methods of growing rich: And in Conſequence of This, innocent Families may often ſuffer here in this World, for the Sins of their Fore-Fathers; who

Prov. xxviii. 20. 22.

Hab. ii. 9.

ver. 10.

ver. 11.

who were themſelves reſerved for a much ſeverer and more dreadful Puniſhment. SERM. XVI.

Another Reaſon for the viſible Inequality in the Conditions of good and bad Men may be, That the true Characters of Men cannot always certainly be known; and for this Reaſon 'tis not always ſo eaſy to judge of their genuine Merits and Demerits. They who paſs for very good Men in the Eyes of the World, may not be ſo in the Sight of God. He judgeth not, as Man judgeth; for he ſearcheth the Heart, and trieth the Reins. As St. *John* ſays, *All Unrighteouſneſs is Sin.* And therefore He may ſee Sins in his Creatures which are very little thought of, and perhaps ſcarcely reputed to be ſo in the Opinion of the World: Or elſe it is poſſible that they ſtand chargeable with many great Sins, which may have eſcaped the Knowledge of the World; and which may have brought down theſe Judgments upon them. And again, on the other Hand, ſeveral Perſons may poſſibly be better than the World thinks them: Or if they are really bad, we don't know what Difficulties they may labour under, and what ſevere Trials they have to ſtruggle with: And therefore as there are ſo many Circumſtances neceſſary to be known;

1 John. v. 17.

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before we can form a perfect Judgment: 'Tis no Wonder, if we are frequently miſtaken in the beſt Eſtimates we can make, either of Perſons, or Things. And this brings me to another Reaſon aſſignable for the different Circumſtances of good and bad Men, which is

That God may in his great Wiſdom and Goodneſs permit the Wicked to thrive and proſper here in this World; That ſo they may enjoy the full Reward of an imperfect Virtue. There is ſcarcely any Man ſo utterly abandoned; but that he has ſome good Qualities, which contribute perhaps not a little to the Comfort and Ornament of Society. Now that there may be no Encouragement wanting to the Practice of Religion and Virtue, God may ſee it fit and proper, as being the Righteous Governor of the World; That every Degree of Goodneſs ſhall be rewarded, according to the ſtricteſt Rules of Proportion. And it is not improbable, but that the Supreme Being may have this farther Deſign in it. By ſuffering the Wicked to enjoy the full Reward of their imperfect Virtue here in this World; God may intend perhaps to convince thoſe unhappy Wretches; (if they would but reflect upon it) of his

great

great Juſtice and Goodneſs; which will not ſuffer the leaſt Degree of Virtue to go without its Reward. And he may likewiſe mean to ſhew unto them, how ready he would be, and how willing he is to reward them ſtill farther in another Life; if the other Part of their Behaviour here in This would but give him Leave to do it. SERM. XIV.

The laſt Reaſon I ſhall offer in Defence of the Unequal Diſpenſations of Divine Providence is,

That this Difference is very often the neceſſary Conſequence of the different Principles and Practices of good and bad Men. They, whoſe Conſciences are more ſcrupulous and delicate, cannot prevail upon themſelves to have Recourſe to thoſe little, pitiful, dirty Shifts and Artifices, which the Wickedneſs of the Times has almoſt made a neceſſary Branch of Buſineſs. The Openneſs and Frankneſs of their Tempers, or elſe their Exceſs of Charity, will not ſuffer them to think any Evil of their Neighbours. Hereby they lay themſelves open, as it were, to all the World: And therefore 'tis no Wonder, if they are frequently preyed upon by the crafty and deſigning. But, on the other Hand, they who are not ſo delicate and

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ſqueamiſh as this comes to; they who are perfectly well verſed in all the Myſteries and Subtleties of Trade and Buſineſs; they whoſe Conſciences will ſtretch upon Occaſion, have a very great Advantage over the poor credulous Souls before mentioned. They have it in their Power, not only to defend themſelves againſt the Attempts of Others; but to play their own Game as often as any Occaſions offer; to improve every Advantage to the utmoſt, and to enrich themſelves with the Spoils of other People, who are more conſcientious than themſelves. Whilſt Men act upon ſuch Principles, and have Recourſe to ſuch Methods, they will perhaps ſerve their preſent Ends, and grow rich, and flouriſh for a While. But alaſs! What ſhall all this avail them, when *for all theſe Things God will bring them into Judgment? For what ſhall it profit a Man, if he ſhall gain the whole World, and loſe his own Soul? Or, What ſhall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?*

Eccl. xi. 9. Mark viii. 36, 37.

Other Reaſons might ſtill be offered for the Unequal Diſtribution of the Things of this Life: But I hope thoſe already urged will be thought ſufficient to vindicate the Diſpenſations of Providence. And for this Reaſon, I ought now in the ſecond Place,

II.

II. SERM.

To point out thoſe Moral Conſequences which theſe Reaſons do naturally ſuggeſt unto us. XVI.

But not having Time for This at preſent, I muſt leave it to the next Opportunity.

Now to God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed in all Churches of the Saints, all Honour, Praiſe, Worſhip, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever-more. Amen.

The Practical Uses of the foregoing Doctrine.

MATTHEW xi.

He inveighs against the Evil, and the Good: and leadeth Men on the Path, and on the Way.

IN my First Discourse on these Words, I have proposed,

To lay before you the Apparent, and the probable Reasons of the unequal Dispensations of Providence in This Life.

And

II.

To point out Their Moral Consequences, which These Reasons do naturally suggest unto us.

The First of these Heads I made the Subject of my Two last Discourses. And I come now in the Second Place,

II.

The Practical Uſes of the foregoing Doctrine.

MATTHEW v. 45.

---He maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.

IN my Firſt Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I propoſed, SERM. XVII.

I.

To lay before you the Apparent, and the probable Reaſons of the unequal Diſpenſations of Providence in This Life.

And II.

To point out Thoſe Moral Conſequences, which Theſe Reaſons do naturally ſuggeſt unto us.

The Firſt of theſe Heads I made the Subjeſt of my Two laſt Diſcourſes. And I come now in the Second Place,

II.

II.

To point out those Moral Consequences, or practical Uses, which These Reasons do naturally suggest unto us.

1. The First Use to be made of the Doctrine already laid down is expressly declared by our Blessed Saviour himself, in the Verse which goes before my Text. *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* And then he assigns the Reason whereon the Necessity of this Duty is founded; *That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust.* As if he had said, Your heavenly Father is kind and merciful to the greatest of Sinners; to those very ungrateful, wicked Wretches, who are utter Enemies to Him: But still This doth not hinder Him from doing Good to them; and pouring down his Blessings upon them: Which are so many Testimonies of the Divine Love, and Goodness to sinful Men. He still sends them *Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons*; notwithstanding all their base Ingratitude to Him; and fills their

ver. 44.

ver. 45.

Acts xiv. 17.

their Hearts with Food and Gladneſs. There- SERM. fore as God is thus *kind to the Unthankful,* XVII. *and to the Evil*; you muſt learn of Him to be ſo too: And, as God loved you, *whilſt* Rom. v. *you were yet Sinners,* and conſequently Ene- 8. mies; and, as a Proof of his Love, ſent Me, his Son, to *die for you*: Even ſo muſt you love your Enemies, in Imitation of the Divine Goodneſs. For, as the Goſpel Scheme of Salvation by Me took its firſt Riſe from Mercy and Forgiveneſs, from Love and Goodneſs: 'Tis abſolutely neceſſary, That you alſo ſhould be influenced and actuated by the ſame Divine Principles: Becauſe, without This you cannot be duely ſenſible of God's Mercy and Goodneſs to you; nor properly thankful for it: Neither can you *be the Children of your Father, which is in Heaven.* For, 'tis natural for Children to reſemble their Parents, and be like unto them: Not only in their Perſons, but alſo in their Tempers and Diſpoſitions; in their Principles, and Practices. For which Reaſon you muſt forgive your Enemies, and even love them; in like Manner, as God loves, and forgives you: That ſo Ye alſo may *be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

Such

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Such is the Neceſſity, and the Duty of Forgiveneſs, and ſuch are the Reaſons whereon it is grounded! But ſtill it muſt be owned, That this is a Doctrine very unintelligible to the natural Reaſon of Mankind; and directly oppoſite to the Suggeſtions of Pride, of Paſſion and Revenge; and the evil Inſtigations of Fleſh and Blood. What? Muſt we love Thoſe, that have never ſhewn any Love for Us? Muſt we deſire and conſult Their Welfare and Proſperity, who breath Nothing but Malice and Ill-Will to Us? Muſt we endeavour to advance and promote Their Intereſt, who would ruin Us, if they could? Muſt we render good Offices to Thoſe very People, who boil over with Bitterneſs and Rancour toward Us, and watch all Opportunities of doing us Hurt? And muſt we even go ſo far, as to pray for Thoſe very Men, who are ſworn Enemies to the Repoſe and Quiet of our Lives; and greedily embrace, and eagerly catch at all Occaſions they can of wreaking their Spleen and Malice upon us? Muſt we love Thoſe, who conſtantly vilify, and traduce Us; who inſult, and injure us; who vex, and torment us, all our Lives? No. It is impoſſible. No-Body can love ſuch Men as Theſe. Is it poſ-

ſible

ſible therefore that Theſe can be the Perſons our Saviour meant? Are Theſe the Men that we muſt love, and oblige, and ſerve, and do Good to, and pray for? Yes. Theſe are the very Men, whom we are to do all This for. Theſe are the very Perſons our Saviour means. They are our Enemies, whom he requires us to love; our very worſt and bittereſt Enemies: And he tells us, That we cannot *be the Children of our Father which is in Heaven*, without doing all This. And in that excellent Form of Prayer which he has given us; he directs us to pray unto God, for the Forgiveneſs of our Sins, only under this expreſs Condition of our being always ready and willing to forgive the Offences and Tranſgreſſions of other People towards us. And then immediately afterwards he reſumes This Doctrine of the Forgiveneſs of Enemies, and enforces the Practice of it with This Conſideration. *For if ye forgive Men their Treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your Treſpaſſes.* Matt. vi. 14, 15.

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And This we are to do, not once, nor twice, nor twenty Times only; but always: As often as ever we pray, we muſt forgive:

So

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So that we must never presume to pray unto God, to forgive our Sins, till we have first of all, sincerely and from our Hearts, forgiven all Those that have offended against us. And therefore we may conclude it was, That, when *Peter came to* our Saviour, *and said, Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven Times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven Times: But until seventy Times seven.* That is, always. As often as ever thy Brother offends thee.

Matth. xviii. 21, 22.

The greatest Perfection of our Nature consists in the Imitation of God; in being like him, and in copying out those Moral Perfections, which make the Divine Nature to be so truely excellent and amiable as it is, in the Sight of all his Creatures. We must therefore of Necessity love our Enemies, or else we cannot be like unto God. We must needs resemble our Heavenly Father, in this Respect likewise, as well as in others; before he will acknowledge us as his Sons. And therefore we must *put away from us all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-Speaking with all Malice, and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving*

Eph. iv. 31, 32.

forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's Sake hath forgiven us. SERM. XVII.

Whatever therefore ſome People may think of this Matter; and how hard a Taſk ſoever it may be to the carnal Man: Yet he cannot be forgiven himſelf, unleſs he does firſt of all forgive his Enemies, from his Heart. There is no ſuch Thing as being a true Diſciple of Chriſt without it. For our Lord himſelf has declared as much in theſe Words. *By this ſhall all Men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another.* John xiii. 35.

Away then with all Degrees of Animoſity and Reſentment! And let us bid Adieu to all the Emotions of Anger and Paſſion, and chearfully ſacrifice all the vile Suggeſtions of Malice and Revenge, to our Duty towards God, and our Neighbour; and to our Obedience to the Bleſſed Jeſus, and our ſincere Regard and Reverence for his awful Commands: Becauſe, unleſs we obey his Commands, we cannot poſſibly be ſaved by him.

2. The next Uſe to be made of what has been ſaid under the former Head of Diſcourſe is, That as our Condition in the next Life is made to depend upon our Behaviour in This;

SERM. XVII. we ought ſo to improve our Time Here, as that we may, by the Help and Aſſiſtance of God's Grace, and for the Sake of his Mercies in Chriſt Jeſus, be finally happy hereafter. This ſhort Term, which is here given us, was not deſigned as a Seaſon of Mirth and Jollity; to be ſpent only in Pleaſure and Amuſement: But it was given us for much better, and nobler Purpoſes. It was intended, by our merciful Creator, as a Time of Trial and Probation; and as a preparatory State to a much more Important and Glorious One, which is to take Place, as ſoon as This is at an End. It was deſigned as a Seaſon for our ſpiritual Growth and Improvement in the Ways of Virtue and Religion; and for the acquiring ſuch Habits, and Diſpoſitions of Mind, as are neceſſary to fit and prepare us for Thoſe intellectual Joys, and Thoſe inconceivable Pleaſures, which are at God's Right Hand for ever-more. And therefore whenever we give up ourſelves to ſecular Purſuits; and by ſo doing, unhappily neglect the *One Thing needful*; we do in Truth neglect the proper Buſineſs of This Life; and forget That Great Errand, which God ſent us all into This World upon.

Nothing

Nothing therefore can concern us all more nearly; than it does to provide for our comfortable Being in the Next Life. And if we would effectually ſecure This Point; we muſt be ſure to remember the Great End and Deſign of our coming into This World: We muſt *ſet God always before us*, and walk daily as in his Preſence: We muſt keep up always in our Minds a lively Senſe, and a ſettled Belief and Perſuaſion of his Being and his Providence; and a warm and devout Senſe, and an affectionate and thankful Remembrance of the Great Bleſſings of our Creation and Preſervation: And, above all, of God's ineſtimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. We muſt keep all the Promiſes and Threatenings of the Goſpel conſtantly in our View: We muſt always look upon ourſelves *as Strangers and Pilgrims* here in This World, travelling towards a better Country: And we muſt look upon This vain tranſitory Life, as a neceſſary State of Diſcipline and Preparation, for One that is infinitely glorious and happy, and likewiſe eternal. And we muſt accordingly *ſet our Affections on Things above, and not on Things on the Earth*; We muſt *walk by Faith, not by Sight*; and *have our Converſation in Heaven*; SERM. XVII. Col. iii. 2. 2 Cor. v. 7. Phil. iii. 20.

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Heaven; and endeavour in all Things, as far as ever the Weakneſs and Infirmity of Human Nature will permit, to exerciſe an intire Submiſſion and Reſignation to the Will of God; and to go on from Grace to Grace, and from one Degree of Perfection to another; till ſuch Time as we come to *a perfect Man, unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.*

Eph. iv. 13.

Unleſs we live and act in This Manner; we cannot expect that the *Spirit* of God will *always ſtrive with* us ſinful *Men.* He may indeed, out of his wonderful Mercy, prove us, and try us for a long While together: That ſo he may at laſt, by his *Mercy* and *Goodneſs*, by his *Forbearance and Long-Suffering*, lead us to Repentance, and Amendment of Life. But then let God be never ſo patient and long-ſuffering to us-ward; it is impoſſible that we ſhould be tried always: For That would be, to be tried to no Purpoſe. The very Notion of a Trial therefore neceſſarily ſuppoſes, that ſome End muſt be put to it. This World therefore is the appointed Place, and This Life, the Term that is given us, for to make this Trial in. And when This Life once comes to an End, we ſhall then be tried no longer.

God

God is willing, it is true, to try all his Creatures to the utmoſt; and to give them all poſſible Advantages and Opportunities of repenting of their Sins, and amending their Lives. And therefore whenever He is pleaſed to afford a long Term of Life to the Wicked, (and we ſee a great many Old Sinners in the World, who have had a long Term given them:) It is becauſe He is willing to try them to the very uttermoſt; and to bring them, if poſſible, to Repentance and Amendment; to Goodneſs, and to Happineſs: It is becauſe He knows the immenſe Worth of their immortal Souls, which they ſet ſo little Value upon: And therefore He is not willing that they ſhould periſh; but is loath to give them up, ſo long as there is any Poſſibility of recovering them from That deſperate Condition into which they have plunged themſelves. And for this Reaſon He does not intirely caſt Them off from Him, and utterly forſake them; notwithſtanding that They forſake Him: But He kindly tries all the Methods of his Grace and Mercy upon them firſt of all. And to this End, He often viſits them with his *Judgments*; That they may, if poſſible, *learn Righteouſneſs*. And as holy *David* expreſſes it, God does frequently

SERM. XVII.

Iſai. xxvi. 9.

SERM. XVII. quently *out of very Faithfulneſs cauſe them to be troubled.*

Pſa. cxix. 75. There is a great Mixture of Love and Tenderneſs, of Mercy and Pity, even in the ſevereſt of all God's Diſpenſations: And frequently, when He ſeems to be moſt angry; then moſt of all do his wonderful Mercy and Goodneſs appear. With this gracious View, He often ſends Afflictions, and Sickneſs upon them: He exerciſes them with a long Succeſſion of croſs Accidents, Diſappointments and Misfortunes: He puniſhes them, as He did *David*, with the Loſs of Children, Relations, and Friends: That ſo He may correct and amend the *Errors of their Ways*, and draw off their Affections from This World, and the Things of it: And by Theſe Means *ſave their Souls from Death*; and bring them, like ſo many returning Prodigals, ſafe Home to Himſelf at laſt. Therefore it is, That God does not haſtily *enter into Judgment* with Theſe poor Sinners: But being deſirous that they ſhould turn unto Him, and live; He gives them all poſſible Room and Opportunity to come unto Him by Faith and Repentance; and to *call upon Him, while He is* ſtill *near* unto them; and

Iſai. lv. 6.

to

to *ſeek* Him early, *while He may* ſtill *be found* by them. SERM. XVII.

And that This is God's Deſign, in trying Men ſo long as he does, is very evident from what he ſays of himſelf, in the Prophet, *I the Lord ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give every Man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings.* Jer. xvii. 10. This Declaration therefore may ſerve to convince us, That when once God is pleaſed to put an End to our preſent State of Trial or Probation; He will then give unto every one of us, *according to our Ways, and according to the Fruit of our Doings.* And if we ſtand it out ſtill againſt all his preſent gracious Tenders and Overtures of Pardon and Forgiveneſs; if we ſtill go on in our Sins, without Remorſe; and at laſt die, without Repentance: He will Then *for ever* after *abſent himſelf* from us; and *will be no more entreated* by us: *His Mercy* will then be *clean gone for ever:* And his preſent gracious Offers of Mercy and Pardon will then *come utterly to an End for ever-more.* God will then be no longer *gracious* unto us; but will for ever *ſhut up his Loving-Kindneſs in Diſpleaſure.* His Mercy muſt then give Way to his Juſtice, and his Vengeance take Place Pſa. lxxvii. 7. ver. 8. ver. 9.

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of his Long-Suffering and Forbearance. When the Day of Mercy is once paſt, it will be too late to ſue for Pardon. Then will be the Time for Judgment; and then a due and manifeſt Diſtinction ſhall be made between the Righteous and the Wicked; between Thoſe that ſerved God here in This World, and Thoſe that ſerved him not.

Pſa. lxxxviii. 12.

When we are once gone into That *Land*, *where all* the Follies and Vanities of This World *are forgotten*; there will be no coming back here again: For *between* This World and the Next, *there is a great Gulf fixed*, which we ſhall never be able to *paſs*.

Luke xvi. 26.

Thoſe unhappy Wretches who are already gone out of This World; without being prepared to enter into the Next: They who have been in Their Time, as We are now, tried, and proved for a long While together; and, like too many of Us, to no Manner of Purpoſe, excepting the greater Manifeſtation of God's Juſtice in puniſhing them: I ſay, What would Thoſe poor Wretches give, if they had it, to be tried once more; and to have the ſame Bleſſed Opportunities, which we, by God's Grace, now happily enjoy? How careful and exact would They then be; how fearful of offending God; and how ſollicitous

ſollicitous and diligent to *work out their Sal-*
vation with Fear and Trembling? But Alaſs!
Their Time of Trial is now for ever paſt
and gone: There is no Repentance for
them in the Grave: But as Death left them,
Judgment hath found them; and they are
for ever caſt *into the* Lake of Fire and Brim-
ſtone; *where their Worm dieth not, and the*
Fire is not quenched; and where *the Smoak of*
their Torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever.

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Phil. ii. 12.

Rev. xx. 10.

Mark ix. 44.

Rev. xiv. 11.

This, my Brethren, is their dreadful Condition. And, That it may never come to be ours; let Us, whilſt we are ſtill kept Here upon our Trial; make a right Uſe of That Time, which God, in his Mercy, is pleaſed to grant us; to prepare, and to fit ourſelves for Heaven. And let Us conſider farther, That as Thoſe unhappy Wretches above-mentioned had once their full Time of Trial; but are now tried no more: Even ſo ſhall We be ſufficiently and fully tried, before ever God will take us out of This World: But whenever This Time of our Trial is once expired; We ſhall then be tried no longer. And as They were forced to go out of This World, at their appointed Time, and to make Way for Us: Even ſo ſhall We, whenever our Turns come; when our Trials

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are once at an End; be forced likewiſe to quit the Stage of This Life: And to give Place to a New Set of Men; who ſhall likewiſe be tried, as We are now: And who ſhall, in like Manner, be obliged to make Room for Thoſe, who may happen to come after them.

Let us therefore all of us, whilſt it is ſtill called To-Day, whilſt our Time of Trial ſtill laſts, *give Diligence*, and ſeriouſly endeavour *to make our Calling and Election ſure*: That ſo when we are throughly tried and found faithful, we may receive That *Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the Righteous Judge ſhall give us* all *at That Day*; if we live only as becomes his Diſciples.

2 Pet. i. 10.

2 Tim. iv. 8.

I might proceed now to point out Thoſe other Practical Uſes to be made of the Doctrine of my Text. But This muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now, To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

The Practical Uſes of the foregoing Doctrine.

MATTHEW V. 45.

---He maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt.

SERM. XVIII.

IN my Firſt Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I propoſed,

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To point out Thoſe Moral Conſequences, which Theſe Reaſons do naturally ſuggeſt unto us,

The Firſt of theſe Heads I went through, in my Two former Diſcourſes on the Words of my Text.

And

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And in my laſt I did, in the Second Place, II.

Proceed to point out Some of Thoſe Moral Conſequences, and Practical Uſes, which do naturally ariſe from Thence.

But not having been able to ſhew Them all at That Time; I ſhall now proceed to the next Uſe, that is to be made of the Doctrine of my Text, which is This.

3. That we ought not to confine our Views to the narrow Limits of This Life: But we ſhould, on the contrary, be particularly careful to extend, and carry them on, into the Next.

Although the Rewards and Puniſhments of the Next Life may now ſeem to lie at a great Diſtance from us: Yet They will, one Day or other, be preſent to us; and That in a very ſenſible and affecting Manner: And for ought we know, They may be much nearer to a great many of us, than we are now aware of. But if They were actually as far off from us, as our fondeſt Wiſhes could poſſibly ſuggeſt: Yet it would be our greateſt Wiſdom, to have a conſtant Eye to them; and to regulate our Behaviour in ſuch a Manner, as that we may not be ſurpriſed by them; let them come as ſoon as They will. Although

though They may now ſeem to concern us very little; becauſe They may appear perhaps to be a great Way off from us: Yet we ought to conſider, That They will certainly come ſooner, or later: And that whenever They do come, we ſhall be as much intereſted, and concerned in them, as we are now intereſted, and concerned in the preſent Moment: And not only ſo, but infinitely more. SERM. XVIII.

For, ſo far forth, as the moſt exquiſite Senſe of Pain, which is without any Intermiſſion, and endleſs in its Duration, muſt neceſſarily exceed a ſmall and tranſient Uneaſineſs: Juſt ſo far forth, does our Eternal Intereſt in the Next Life neceſſarily exceed any little Concernment, which we can poſſibly have here in This. Therefore it is the moſt dangerous Miſtake, which we can poſſibly commit; To imagine, that we are but ſlightly concerned in What may befal us in the Next Life. Becauſe, That, which is now future and diſtant, although it does not affect us at This Time; will yet affect us very nearly and ſenſibly, whenever it comes to be preſent with us: And That, not only as much as the Things of This Life affect us now; but infinitely more than we can poſſibly conceive, or think.

We

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We ſhall Then have as ſtrong and lively a Senſe and Feeling of Pleaſure, and Pain, as we have now: We ſhall have as vehement, and earneſt a Deſire of the former, and as ſtrong and violent an Averſion, and Abhorrence for the latter, as we have now. Therefore it would be the utmoſt Extremity of Folly and Madneſs; To be ſo exceedingly intent upon our preſent Enjoyments; as to make no Proviſion, nor any Sort of Preparation for our comfortable Being in Time to come.

Do we not find by Experience, That we are as nearly and deeply intereſted and concerned in What befals Us Now, as we once were in What happened to us, perhaps Ten, or Twenty Years ago? And have we not as quick and ſtrong a Senſe and Feeling of Pleaſure and Pain Now, as we had Then? And have we not at preſent the ſame Deſire of Happineſs, and the ſame Abhorrence of Pain and Miſery, as we had at That Time? If therefore we have ſtill the ſame Senſe of Things: If we have ſtill the ſame Likings, and Diſlikes; the ſame Longings, and Loathings; the ſame Inclinations, and Averſions; as we had Then: Is it not reaſonable to believe, That we ſhall have the ſame Deſire of Happineſs, and the

ſame

ſame Averſion to Miſery, a hundred Years hence, and a thouſand Years hence; and, in ſhort, in every ſucceeding Part and Portion of our Beings, as we have at This Time? And if it would have been unnatural, and ſtupid in us; Ten, or Twenty Years ago: Not to have made any Preparation, or Proviſion, for our comfortable Being, and Subſiſtence at This preſent Time: Is it not infinitely more unnatural and ſtupid; To be ſo far from making a due Preparation, and a proper Proviſion for our comfortable Being, and Exiſtence in the Next World: That we do, on the contrary, uſe our utmoſt Endeavours; and take all poſſible Pains, as I may ſay; To make ourſelves, our Souls, and Bodies, infinitely unhappy, and miſerable to all Eternity? And This without any Intervals of Reſpite or Intermiſſion; and without any Proſpect or Poſſibility of being ever delivered from That dreadful Condition? SERM. XVIII.

Any Man that will but ſeriouſly conſider This Argument, in its full Force, and Strength; and ſuffer it to reſt upon his Mind, for ſome Time: I ſay, every ſuch Perſon muſt neceſſarily perceive the great Weight and Importance of it: And be abundantly convinced of the wretched Folly and Stupidity

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dity of going on in the *Broad Way* of Sin; without conſidering, That it leads down to Death and Deſtruction.

This Argument is of ſuch prodigious Importance, that I ſhall beg Leave to repeat it once more in a few Words.

If we were concerned, ſo far back as Ten Years ago, in What ſhould befal us within the Compaſs of This preſent Year: If it was our Intereſt, and our Duty Then; To make a prudent Proviſion, and a neceſſary Preparation for our comfortable Being, and Subſiſtence, at This Time: And if we were Then obliged, in Reaſon, and in Prudence; To guard againſt any Miſery, which would otherwiſe betide us in This Period of our Lives: I ſay, if we will but allow as much as This: (And no Man of common Underſtanding can poſſibly deny the Expediency of ſuch a Fore-caſt;) Then it will follow, by the ſame Rule; That we ought to provide for our Happineſs in the Next World; and to guard againſt That inſupportable and Eternal Miſery, which will otherwiſe infallibly come upon us.

For the Salvation of our Immortal Souls, in Time to come; is, with infinitely more Reaſon, to be eſteemed a proper Object of

our Care and Concern Now: Than our comfortable Subſiſtence at This Time, was judged to be a proper Object of our Care and Concern, Ten, or Twenty Years ago. Or, in other Words, 'tis infinitely more our Intereſt Now, to ſecure the Salvation of our Immortal Souls in the Next World: Than it was our Concern, Ten, or Twenty Years ago, to provide for our Subſiſtence, and our comfortable Being at This Time. SERM. XVIII.

This is the true State of This Argument: And it is ſuch an One, as the greateſt Part of the World ſeem to underſtand perfectly well. For they conſtantly act upon this Principle of making Proviſion for the Time to come; ſo far as the Intereſts of This World are concerned. But the Misfortune is, that *The Children of this World are in their Generation wiſer than the Children of Light.* Luke xvi. 8.

Upon the Whole then, Since neither the Pleaſures nor *the Sufferings of This preſent* Life are *worthy to be compared with* Thoſe of the Next; let us *not look* any longer to *the Things which are ſeen, but at the Things which are not ſeen: For the Things which are ſeen are Temporal; but the Things which are not ſeen, are Eternal.* Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 18.

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4. The next Moral Conſequence to be drawn from my former Head of Diſcourſe is, The Duty of Patience and Submiſſion to God's Will.

Pſa. xxxvii. 1. We muſt not *fret ourſelves becauſe of the Ungodly; neither* muſt we *be envious againſt the Evil-Doers.* If God permits them to flouriſh and proſper; it is but for a ſhort ver. 2. Seaſon; *For they ſhall ſoon be cut down like the Graſs: And withered even as the green Herb.* ver. 7. And therefore we muſt not *grieve ourſelves at Him whoſe Way doth proſper, againſt the Man that doeth after evil Counſels.* For a little ver. 9. While more, and all the *Wicked-Doers ſhall* ver. 10. *be rooted out. Yet a little While, and the Ungodly ſhall be clean gone: Thou ſhalt look after his Place, and he ſhall be away.*

And if, on the other Hand, God is pleaſed to ſuffer his faithful Servants to fall into a great Variety of Trouble and Affliction: They ought to conſider, That it is his Will, to exerciſe, and to try them in this Manner; and That He beſt knows what is fitteſt and moſt convenient for them: And that for This Reaſon, the greateſt Afflictions may in the End prove the greateſt Bleſſings; provided only that they make a right Uſe of them. If our Afflictions ſerve, to lead us to Repen-

tance;

tance: If they are a Means of preventing us from falling into Sin: If they help us to wean and draw off our Affections from This vain fooliſh World, and the trifling Concerns of it: If they give us an Opportunity of exerciſing our Faith in God, our Truſt in his Promiſes, and an intire Submiſſion and Reſignation to his Will: Then are they, in Truth, the greateſt Bleſſings, which God in his Good Providence can poſſibly beſtow upon us. And, on the other Hand, They who enjoy all the Comforts and Advantages of This Life: If they only abuſe, and pervert them to the Purpoſes of Sin and Folly: Then are they, in Reality, ſo far from being real Bleſſings, as ſome thoughtleſs Perſons are apt to eſteem them: That they are, in Truth, the greateſt Misfortunes, and the heavieſt Curſes which can fall upon them: As they only ſerve to make them more deſperately wicked, and profane, than they would otherwiſe be. SERM. XVIII.

For which Reaſon we ought to take every Thing that comes patiently, and contentedly; and endeavour to improve every Event, and every Occurrence, to our Spiritual Advantage: And we ſhould, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Learn in whatſoever State we are, therewith* Phil iv. 11.

SERM. XVIII. *to be content. Giving Thanks always for all Things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Eph. v. 20.

4. The next Use to be made of What has been said on this Subject is; That we should not suffer our Belief of God's Providence to be staggered, and shaken, by the irregular Appearances in the Moral World. It is sufficient for us, That all the Difficulties of Divine Providence will be fully solved and cleared up, at the last Day; all the seeming Irregularities of it effectually set to Rights; and all the supposed Defects of it abundantly supplied. Therefore we ought to sit down contentedly under our present Ignorance of the Divine Counsels. For, as the Prophet

Isai. xl. 13. expresses it, *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his Counsellour hath taught him?* These are some of Those *Secret Things* which *belong* only *unto the Lord our God.* Therefore we should not presume to pry into them, nor to be over anxious and uneasy about them.

Deut. xxix. 29

5. The last Moral Consequence I shall draw from What has been said in my former Discourses on the Words of my Text is, That God's Mercies to us, here in this Life, should powerfully incline and dispose us, to fit and

prepare

prepare ourselves for those inestimable and inconceivable Blessings which are reserved for us in the Next. SERM. XVIII.

The good Things of This Life are a Sort of Earnest, or Pledge, of the Joys of Heaven: And God's Bounty to us Here is the strongest Proof of his Power and Inclination to make us infinitely happy hereafter. There are so many Marks and Proofs of his Goodness, here in This lower World: And he has given us such strong and convincing Testimonies of his extraordinary Care and Concern for us, that we may very safely trust him for the Performance of his Promises in the Next Life.

After such a large and plentiful Experience as we all have of his Goodness Here in This World: It would be the greatest Ingratitude and Madness imaginable, to doubt of the Truth and Certainty of them. For surely, He that has suited such a wonderful Variety of worldly Pleasures, and Satisfactions, to our grosser Organs of Sense; most certainly can, and will provide infinitely greater Pleasures for our Better Part; if we are only found worthy to partake of them.

Have we here before our Eyes such a Multitude of Instances of the Divine Power;

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and ſhall we call That Power in Queſtion? And do we daily receive ſo many Marks and Proofs of his Goodneſs; and can we any longer doubt of his Inclination, to make us infinitely and eternally happy? And ſhall we after all be ſo baſely ungrateful, as to be *Lovers of Pleaſure, more than Lovers of God?* No. By no Means. Let us rather boldly ſhake Hands with all the ſhort-lived Pleaſures of This World, as often as ever they come in Competition with our Duty to God and our Intereſts in the Next. Let us always live, as in his Preſence, and endeavour to *have our Converſation in Heaven*, whilſt we continue here upon Earth: Always remembring, That our Condition in the Next World will be finally and irreverſibly determined, according to our Behaviour here. And that we may all of us be ſo *wiſe* as to *underſtand this*, and duely to *conſider our latter End*; May God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

2 Tim. iii. 4.

Deut. xxxii. 29.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever-more. Amen.

The

The General Nature of the Christian Faith.

A SERMON Preached at *St. Mary's* in HAVERFORD-WEST, *Sept.* 4th. 1748.

1 JOHN v. 4.

---This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

ALMOST extraordinary Victory indeed! Of all the Conquests that were ever yet made by frail Man, This over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, is of all others by far the greatest. For, whether we consider the great Frailty and Infirmity of Human Nature; the many Allurements of the World without us; or the various Wiles and Stratagems of our Grand Adversary: The Difficulties and Dangers of our Spiritual Warfare must needs appear exceeding great; the Issue and Event of it very hazardous and precarious: And when we are at last, through God's Grace, more than Con-

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querors; the Victory we gain cannot but be of all Others the moſt honourable and glorious. We are by Nature framed in ſuch a Manner as does, in many Circumſtances, render the Practice of Virtue and Piety, even under all the Advantages of the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, not a little difficult and uneaſy. And if with all Theſe Helps, the due Diſcharge of our Duty be ſo very difficult, as it often is; we may then venture to pronounce, That, without Theſe extraordinary Aſſiſtances, it would be utterly impracticable.

We are, it muſt be owned, in ſome Sort, able to apprehend the Meaſures, and Obligations of Virtue and Piety: And our Natural Notices of Good, and Evil, might in ſome Caſes, and in ſome Degrees, help to reſtrain us from Sin and Wickedneſs. But however legible ſome of the Great Characters of our Duty may ſeem to be: It muſt be allowed nevertheleſs, That the Underſtanding of Man, That *Candle of the Lord*, affords him at beſt but a glimmering, faint, dim Light; Juſt as much as ſerves him, to diſcern his own Weakneſs and Miſery; but not ſo much as is ſufficient to diſcover to him any Remedy for it, or Relief under it. And, which is ſtill a great Addition to his Misfortune, This

Prov. xx. 27.

dim

dim Light is ſtill farther weakened, and obſcured, by the unhappy Prevalence of his Paſſions, and the untoward Influence of his degenerate Nature. SERM. XIX.

Such is the Condition of Man, ſince the Fall; That he has neither Capacity ſufficient to furniſh him with a thorough Knowledge, and Senſe of his Duty; nor any Ability to live ſuitably thereunto. * And, as it was of Old, in the Heathen World, Experience and Obſervation may ſerve to prove at This Day: That there is ſome unhappy Biaſs laid upon our corrupt Nature: That our Reaſon, and our Paſſions, prompt us to Purſuits of a contrary Nature: And whilſt we are convinced of our Obligations to Virtue; we are daily carried out to That which is vicious and ſinful. In this Manner it is St. *Paul* complains, *For we know that the Law is Spiritual: But I am carnal, ſold under Sin. For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* Rom. vii. 14, 15.

And beſide this unhappy Propenſity to Evil, which proceeds from the wretched

* ——————Si poſſem, ſanior eſſem,
Sed trahit invitam nova vis; aliudque Cupido,
Mens aliud ſuadet. Video meliora, proboque;
Deteriora ſequor.
Ovid. Metam. Lib. 7. v. 18.

SERM. XIX. Depravity of Human Nature: We may conſider farther the ill Effects of a bad Education. Vice is a Thing of a ſpeedy Growth; whereas Virtue is the Fruit of great Care and Cultivation. The former ſhoots up ſuddenly of itſelf, and ſoon takes a deep Root: But the latter grows up by leiſurely Degrees, and requires a great Deal of Time and Trouble, before it ſettles into a confirmed Habit. 'Tis eaſy therefore to ſee, how quick the Progreſs of Vice muſt be, in undiſciplined, and unprincipled Minds: Where Children are left too much to themſelves; and where there is not a due Care taken, to form them betimes to Virtue and Piety. As *Socrates* obſerves, 'The choiceſt Spirits; 'Thoſe who have the moſt vigorous and 'ſprightly Parts, and who promiſe beſt to 'ſucceed in any Thing they apply themſelves to; do, by the Means of Diſcipline, 'and Inſtruction in their Duty, turn out 'the beſt of Men, and are a Bleſſing to 'their Country; becauſe they atchieve many 'great and noble Exploits: But if they are 'undiſciplined, and unimproved; they are 'generally the vileſt of their Species, and 'the very Peſt and Bane of Society: For 'not knowing what is proper to be done,

'and

and what not, they frequently attempt SERM.
wrong Things; and being of a towring and XIX.
impetuous Spirit, they are not eaſily re-
ſtrained, nor averted from their Purpoſe:
Inſomuch that they are frequently carried
out to the worſt of Actions.' * And if
This be all that can be expected from the
fineſt Geniuſes, and the moſt promiſing Diſ-
poſitions; when they are not formed to Diſ-
cipline, and improved by Education: What
may we not apprehend from the moſt way-
ward and perverſe Minds; when they are
untamed, and uninſtructed? Thoſe briſk
and active Spirits, which Youth generally
ſupplies, too often ſally out into numberleſs
Extravagancies: And do, for Want of proper
Diſcipline and Inſtruction, make them quite
impatient of Reſtraint. And when they be-
come thus refractory, and ſelf-willed; 'tis
not to be imagined, that they will be con-
formed to any Rules, or confined within any

* Ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰς ἰυφυεςάτας, ἐξόμως τε καὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὅλας, καὶ ἐξεργασικωτάτας, ὧν ἂν ἐγχειρῶσι, παιδευθείσας μὲν καὶ φαθύμους, ἃ δεῖ πράττειν, ἀρίςους τε καὶ ὠφελιμωτάτους γίνεσθαι. (πλεῖςα γὰρ καὶ μέγις' ἀγαθὰ ἐργάζεσθαι,) ἀπαιδεύτους δὲ καὶ ἀμαθεῖς γινομένους, κακίςους τε καὶ βλαβερωτάτους γίνεσθαι. κρίνειν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπισαμένους, ἃ δεῖ πράτειν, πολλάκις πονηροῖς ἐπιχειρεῖν πράγμασι. μεγαλείους δὲ καὶ σφοδρὸς ὅλας, δυσκαθέκλους τε καὶ δυσαποτρεπτους εἶναι. διὸ πλεῖς' ἂν καὶ μέγις' κακὰ ἐργάζεσθαι. *Xenoph. Memor.* L. 4. Cap. 1. §.

Bounds.

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Bounds. And the Conſequence will be, that they will not only fall into evil Courſes; but be every Day more and more confirmed in them. And as the Strength and Force of inveterate Habits do naturally become greater through Indulgence; their Paſſions will, in Length of Time, gain an abſolute Sway over their Minds; and the powerful Influence of bad Examples will lead them too ſtrongly to a vicious Imitation: Inſomuch that their Return into the Ways of Virtue and Piety will be exceedingly difficult, and improbable.

And if we add to all This the various Wiles and Stratagems of our Grand Adverſary the Devil; the Difficulties and Dangers of the Chriſtian Warfare muſt needs appear very formidable and diſcouraging. For, as the Apoſtle deſcribes him, *He goeth about like a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.* He knows all our weakeſt Parts, and watches our moſt unguarded Hours: He ſuits his Temptations to our different Tempers and Complexions; and plies them with his utmoſt Skill and Diligence. And whilſt we are thus powerfully aſſaulted from without, and in ſo much Danger of being betrayed from within: And are at the ſame Time ſo utterly defenceleſs, and off our Guard,

1 Pet. v. 8.

Guard, 'tis no Wonder if we fall an easy Prey to every Temptation that beſets us. SERM. XIX.

This being in General the State and Condition of Human Nature, we have all of us abundant Reaſon to cry out with St. *Paul*, *O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the Body of this Death!* But however deſperate and melancholy our Condition may ſeem at firſt Sight to be, we have equal Reaſon with the ſame Apoſtle, *to thank God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* For, what neither the Law of Nature, nor the Law of *Moſes could do*; in that they were both *weak through the Fleſh*; God the Father hath done effectually, by *ſending his own Son* to die for us; and thereby to *make us free from the Law of Sin and Death.* Being therefore *not under the Law, but under Grace*; we may well join in that rapturous Exultation of the Apoſtle, *I can do all Things through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me.* Or elſe in the Words of my Text, *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.* Rom. vii. 24. ver. 25. Phil. iv. 13.

In my enſuing Diſcourſe on theſe Words, I ſhall ſhew,

I.

The Nature of the Chriſtian Faith in General,

II

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II.

I ſhall ſhew more diſtinctly the ſeveral Eſſential Properties of it.

And III.

The many and great Benefits and Advantages of it.

And I.

Of the Nature of the Chriſtian Faith.

In Order that we may have a more diſtinct and clear Notion and Conception of the Chriſtian Faith, or of *Faith in Chriſt*; it will be neceſſary to conſider Faith under theſe three different Views.

1. That of Human Faith.
2. That of Divine Faith.
3. That of Chriſtian Faith.

And Firſt,

Faith or Belief, in the General, is a Rational and Well-Grounded Perſuaſion of the Truth of any Propoſition, or the Certainty of any Fact. I ſay, a Rational and Well-Grounded Perſuaſion, by Way of Contradiſtinction to Credulity on the one Hand, and univerſal Scepticiſm on the other. To believe any Thing without ſufficient Foundation for believing it, is the Effect of great Weakneſs and Credulity: And not to believe a Thing on proper Grounds; or, which is much

much the ſame, to pretend not to believe it; is a fooliſh Conceitedneſs at leaſt, if not a great Degree of Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs. SERM. XIX.

A Perſon of an honeſt ingenuous Turn of Mind is naturally inclined to yield a ready and unfeigned Aſſent to whatever is duely propoſed to him; and is at the ſame Time ſufficiently ſupported, and confirmed, with a proper Degree of Evidence. Nay, his Aſſent to any ſuch Point, or Matter of Fact, is very little in his own Power; and will almoſt naturally follow the Evidence brought in Support of it. For if, as is ſuppoſed, he rightly apprehends thoſe Proofs which are propoſed to his Underſtanding; if he ſeriouſly conſiders them, carefully examines, and duely weighs them; and finds them upon Trial worthy of his Aſſent, or Belief: He muſt neceſſarily aſſent to the Truth and Reality of That which is ſupported by them. Inſomuch that he can neither believe any Thing, without ſufficient Reaſons for believing it; neither can he with-hold his Aſſent, or diſbelieve it; when Reaſon requires that he ſhould believe it. His Belief will always be proportioned to the Degrees of Evidence: And according as That is either more or leſs ſtrong; even ſo will his Belief

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of any Point, or Matter of Fact, be either ſtronger, or weaker.

When a Thing, propoſed to our Aſſent, is perfectly conſonant and agreeable to our own Knowledge, Experience and Obſervation of Things; and is at the ſame Time duely atteſted by Perſons allowed to be competent Judges of the Matter; and of undoubted Veracity and Integrity; 'tis not poſſible for us to with-hold it: But we muſt, and do believe it, whether we will, or no. But when a Thing offered to our Aſſent is not perfectly and throughout agreeable to our own Knowledge, Experience and Obſervation; And where we are not entirely perſuaded of the Skill, and Ability; and the Veracity, and Integrity of the Propoſer, or Relater; There our Aſſent will be proportioned to the Degrees of Evidence: And it is not ſo properly to be called Faith as Opinion. Becauſe, as I have already obſerved, Faith is a Rational and Well-Grounded Perſuaſion: Whereas * Opinion is a lower, and weaker Degree

* Nec tamen ideò Fides cum Opinione eſt confundenda. Opinio enim eſt Aſſenſus infirmus, et cum Dubitatione conjunctus. Fides verò eſt aſſenſus firmus, qui dubitationem excludit; licet ſit infirmior quam ille qui ex Demonſtratione aut Senſu habetur. Itaque Fidei aſſenſus medium tenet locum inter Opinionem et Scientiam, aut Cognitionem ſenſualem; eique ſufficit ut in luctâ adverſus dubitationes prævaleat,

Degree of Aſſent, founded upon a lower, and weaker Degree of Evidence. From hence then it appears, That Human Faith is, according to the Definition of a Learned Prelate of our Church, * *An Aſſent unto any Thing credible, merely upon the Teſtimony of Man.* Thus for Example, when we are told by ſeveral Hiſtorians, That there were once ſuch Men upon Earth as *Julius Cæſar*, and *Alexander*; That the former was The Firſt *Roman* Emperor, and the latter King of *Macedon*: We aſſent unto Theſe Propoſitions, upon the Teſtimony of Thoſe Hiſtorians, as to Things credible in themſelves; and as being recorded by Men, who probably had ſufficient Means and Opportunities of informing themſelves in Theſe Particulars; and who cannot be ſuppoſed to have had any private Intereſts to ſerve, in impoſing upon and deceiving Thoſe, for whoſe Uſe they wrote

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prævaleat, etiamſi ne aliquando invadant ipſamque ſollicitent, non poſſit penitus impedire. *Carcell. Inſtit. Rel. Chriſt.* Lib. 7 Cap. 7. *De Partibus Fidem conſtituentibus.* S. 11.

To this Purpoſe a very eminent Prelate of our Church obſerves, ——That when the appearing Truth of a Thing ſtill leaves a Poſſibility of Falſhood with it, and therefore doth but incline to an Aſſent, it is not called *credible* but *probable*; and an Aſſent to ſuch a Truth is not ſo properly *Faith* as *Opinion.* Pearſon *on the Creed*, Article, *I believe.* P. 3. Twelfth Edition.

* *Pearſon* as quoted above.

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their ſeveral Hiſtories. But then at the ſame Time that we allow their Teſtimony in theſe Matters to be *in a very high Degree credible*: Yet, as Men are Men, and as ſuch capable of deceiving and being deceived: It follows, That Human Faith, as being founded only upon Human Teſtimony, is * a Degree of Aſſent inferior to That which is implied in the Notion of Divine Faith.

2. For this Divine Faith is, An Aſſent unto ſomething as credible, upon the Teſtimony of God. *God is not a Man, that he ſhould lie, nor the Son of Man that he ſhould repent.* He is too wiſe to be deceived himſelf, and too juſt, and too good, to deceive us. Therefore we may with the utmoſt Safety and Confidence build our Faith upon this Foundation, which is ſure and firm. Whatſoever Declarations of his Will he is pleaſed to make unto us in the Holy Scrip-

Numb. xxiii. 19.

* As the Formality of the Object of all Belief conſiſts in Credibility, it clearly follows, That Diverſity of Credibility in the Object will proportionably cauſe a Diſtinction of Aſſent in the Underſtanding, and conſequently a ſeveral Kind of Faith. *Pearſon* Ibid.

And again,—There is a double Teſtimony. The Teſtimony of Man to Man, relying upon Human Authority, and the Teſtimony of God to Man, founded upon Divine Authority: Which two Kinds of Teſtimony are reſpective Grounds of two Kinds of Credibility, Human and Divine; and conſequently there is a twofold Faith, diſtinguiſhed by this double Object, a Human and Divine Faith. *Idem Ibidem.*

tures,

tures, may be abſolutely depended upon by all his Creatures: Whatſoever he has commanded ought to be punctually and conſcientiouſly complied with: Whatſoever he has promiſed, and whatſoever he has threatened, will moſt ſurely be fulfilled and executed in his due Time: And therefore ought to be ſincerely believed, and ſeriouſly and conſtantly attended to. For, as *Samuel* ſays, *The Strength of* Iſrael *will not lie, nor repent: For he is not a Man that he ſhould repent.* 1 Sam. xv. 29.

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* The Teſtimony of God then is, in its own Nature, infallible; 'tis the higheſt Degree of Evidence any Propoſition, or any Matter of Fact is capable of; and conſequently Divine Faith is the firmeſt and ſtrongeſt Aſſent, which we can poſſibly give to any Truths, that are propoſed to our

* There is one Sort of Propoſitions that challenge the higheſt Degree of our Aſſent, upon bare Teſtimony, whether the Thing propoſed, agree or diſagree with common Experience, and the ordinary Courſe of Things, or no. The Reaſon whereof is, becauſe the Teſtimony is of ſuch an One, as cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and that is, of God himſelf. This carries with it Certainty beyond Doubt, Evidence beyond Exception. This is called by a peculiar Name, Revelation, and our Aſſent to it, Faith: Which has as much Certainty as our Knowledge itſelf; and we may as well doubt of our own Being, as we can, whether any Revelation from God be true. Locke's *Eſſay*, Book 4. Chap. 16. S. 14.

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Underſtandings. The Difference therefore between Human and Divine Faith conſiſts in the different Degrees of Credibility, which there are in the Teſtimony of Man, and the Teſtimony of God; in the different Degrees of Importance in their ſeveral Objects; and in the different Obligations we are under to attend to the Subject-Matter of each.

What a Creature, ſuch as ourſelves, propoſes to our Aſſent may perhaps be Matter of Indifference: We may not think it worthy of an extraordinary Attention: It may make a very faint and tranſient Impreſſion upon our Minds: We may not conſider it with all that Seriouſneſs, and Intenſeneſs of Thought, which we generally beſtow upon Subjects of greater Importance: We may not examine, and weigh all its ſeveral Circumſtances, and Motives of Credibility, with our uſual Care and Exactneſs: And all this we may, in ſeveral Caſes, neglect doing; without Prejudice to any of our Intereſts, and without the Violation of any Moral Obligations. But when the Great Lord of Heaven and Earth vouchſafes to make any Declarations of his Will unto us, the Caſe is quite otherwiſe: When he is pleaſed to honour us with his high Commands; and to enforce and guard them

them with the awful Sanctions of his Pro- SERM.
miſes and Threatenings: At our Peril be it, XIX.
if we do not pay a ſincere and reverential
Regard unto them. *He that hath Ears to* Mark. iv.
hear, let him hear. For all our Intereſts in 9.
This Life, and all our Hopes and Expecta-
tions in a better, depend intirely upon our
doing ſo.

And therefore as This is the higheſt De-
gree of Faith, in Reſpect of its Evidence;
it will be neceſſary to ſhew, wherein it dif-
fers from Chriſtian Faith, which is the
Third View I propoſed to conſider Faith in.

3. Chriſtian Faith is, * according to the
ſame great Author already mentioned, *An
Aſſent unto Truths credible upon the Teſtimony
of God, delivered to us in the Writings of
the Apoſtles, and Prophets.*

And here again it will be neceſſary, for
the Sake of the greater Exactneſs and Pre-
ciſion, To conſider Chriſtian Faith under
this double View.

1. In Reſpect of its Object, as a Com-
pleat Revelation of God's Will made to us
in the Goſpel, and deſigned as an Eſſential
Vital Principle of Virtue and Holineſs. And

* See *Pearſon* as above.

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2. With Regard to the Subject of it, the Underſtanding and the Heart of Man, and That Effect and Influence which it has upon both. Or, in other Words, as a ſuitable Habit and Diſpoſition of Mind, continually exerting and putting itſelf forth in a regular and uniform Courſe of virtuous and good Actions. And

1. We may conſider Chriſtian Faith, in Reſpect of its Object, as a compleat Revelation of God's Will, made to us in the Goſpel, and deſigned as an Eſſential Vital Principle of Virtue and Holineſs.

God had indeed, in the Law of *Moſes*, favoured his Peculiar People, the *Jews*, with ſuch a Diſcovery of his Will, as ſuited the particular Circumſtances of That Nation at That Time; and ſuch as was agreeable to the wiſe and good Counſels of Providence in That particular Period of the World. And as, in that carnal State of Things, they were moſt likely to be affected with Temporal Motives; Divine Wiſdom found it moſt expedient at that Time, to enforce and guard its Laws with the prevailing Sanctions of Temporal Promiſes and Threatenings: And to ſhew its Approbation of their Behaviour, by annexing Temporal Proſperity,

Proſperity, and all the Bleſſings of Peace and Plenty, to a Courſe of Obedience: And to ſignify its Diſpleaſure, as often as Occaſion required, by inflicting upon them a long Train of Temporal Evils; and puniſhing their Diſobedience with all the Calamities of War; with Slaughter, Famine, Peſtilence and Captivity. SERM. XIX.

But when the Fulneſs of the Time was come, that *God ſent forth his Son*; he was graciouſly pleaſed by Him to make a compleat and full Diſcovery of his Will to Men; to eſtabliſh his Covenant *upon better Promiſes*, and to give them the moſt amazing and convincing Teſtimonies of his Love for them. Gal. iv. 4.

And as a fuller, and more compleat Diſcovery of God's Will, neceſſarily infers an Obligation to a greater, and more perfect Obedience: As our Attention to the Objects of Faith, and our Endeavours after Obedience, muſt naturally riſe higher, in Proportion to the greater Worth and Importance of them; and the greater Weight and Dignity of its Sanctions: And as our Conſideration of the higheſt, and ſtrongeſt Proofs, that it was poſſible for God himſelf to give us, of his wonderful Love to Mankind, does of Neceſſity lay us under the ſtrongeſt and moſt

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lasting Ties of Duty and Obedience: It follows very plainly from hence, that *Christian Faith* does as much surpass That *Divine Faith*, which was exercised by the *Jews*; as the Revelation of God's Will to us, exceeds those Discoveries of it, which he made to them: As much as the Sanctions of Eternal Rewards and Punishments outweigh those Temporal Ones of Worldly Prosperity and National Calamities in This Life: And as much as our Gospel-Privilege of being *Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ* exceeds their boasted Privilege of being *Abraham*'s Seed, and their Temporal Possessions in the Land of *Canaan*.

That Scheme of Divine Truths, and That System of Heavenly Precepts, which are proposed to us in the Gospel, as the Object of our Faith, and as the Rule of our Lives, for us to square our Behaviour by; are the most solemn and awful, the most serious and important, the most interesting and affecting, the most comprehensive and concise, the most distinct and clear, the most plain and intelligible, the most easy and practicable, which it is possible for us to conceive, or desire: Such as are every Way worthy of a Wise, and Good God, to reveal, and deliver

to

to his Creatures; and every Way ſuited to the various Wants and Neceſſities of their frail and degenerate Nature. SERM. XIX.

That full and ample Diſcovery of God's Nature, and his Will, which the Goſpel makes us; and of his wonderful Love and Condeſcenſion towards us; affords us the ſtrongeſt Inducements, and the moſt powerful Encouragement imaginable, to the Diſcharge of our Duty. The Conſideration of God's Nature, and his Attributes, has a natural and direct Tendency, to promote the Exerciſe of Virtue, and the Practice of Piety in his Creatures. The Senſe and Perſuaſion of his Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, his Majeſty and Power, his Infinite Juſtice and Holineſs, and his unſpeakable Mercy and Goodneſs, do naturally inſpire us with the moſt awful Apprehenſions of his Being and his Providence; with Sincerity of Heart, and Purity of Affections; with the warmeſt Sentiments of Love and Gratitude; with the devouteſt Thoughts, and holieſt Reſolutions; with an unfeigned Zeal for his Honour, and the Intereſts of Religion; and with a Principle and Spirit of Obedience to all God's Commandments. But above all, the Contemplation of God's Mercies in Chriſt,

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of his moſt amazing Love in ſending his Son to die for us; the Conſideration of what the Bleſſed Jeſus has done, and ſuffered for us, cannot but give an uncommon Weight and Force, and a peculiar Dignity and Authority to his Divine Commands. And then more eſpecially, when we conſider, that all his Commands are mild and eaſy; perfectly agreeable to our Nature, and conducive to our Intereſts; perfective of our Happineſs in This Life, as well as inſtrumental to it in the Next. And when we conſider farther, That we are not tied down to a ſinleſs Obedience; but that all poſſible Allowances are made for the Frailty and Infirmity of our Nature; That there is Place always left for Repentance and Amendment; and that as long as there is Life, there is Hope; That the Grace of God is infinitely ſtronger to ſuccour, and aſſiſt us, than the Devil is to tempt, and ſeduce us; That the Sincerity and Earneſtneſs of our Endeavours ſhall be recompenſed with Succeſs Here, and with a Crown of Glory Hereafter; and That the moſt dreadful Puniſhment is reſerved for Thoſe, who *neglect* and deſpiſe This *ſo great* a *Salvation*; who trample under Foot the Son of God, and who count the Blood of the Covenant, where-

with

with they are ſanctified, an unholy Thing; and who do Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace: I ſay, when we conſider all This. And would to God, that we would conſider it! What wonderful Encouragement we have in the Goſpel, and what powerful Inducements to Virtue and Holineſs; what great and precious Promiſes it holds out to us; and what dreadful Threatenings it lays before us: Theſe great and awful Objects of our Faith cannot but prove, what they were deſigned to be, to All that *name the Name of Chriſt*, and That is, an Eſſential Vital Principle of Virtue and Holineſs. This is That *Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints*; and which they were to *commit to faithful Men, who ſhould be able to teach others alſo.* SERM. XIX. Jude iii. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

And this leads me to conſider Chriſtian Faith.

2. With Regard to the Subject of it, the Underſtanding, and the Heart of Man, and That Effect and Influence which it has upon both.

Chriſtian Faith then, as ſeated in the Underſtanding, and the Heart of Man; and conſidered as a Religious Habit aud Diſpoſition of Mind, inclining him to a ſuitable Behaviour, is a Rational and Firm Aſſent to the

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the Doctrines of the Goſpel; together with ſuch a ſerious and ſettled Attention to them, as produces a firm and humble Reliance and Dependence upon the Truth and Certainty of them: And This is joined with ſuch an inviolable Regard to all the Precepts of it, and ſuch a ſteady and uniform Courſe of Virtue and Piety, as is in ſome Meaſure anſwerable to ſuch great and glorious Expectations. For, as St. *John* obſerves, *Every one that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himſelf, even as He is pure.*

1 John iii. 3.

But the right Notion or Conception of the *Chriſtian Faith* is of ſuch a Complex Nature, and of ſuch prodigious Importance; that I ſhall not content myſelf with a bare Definition, or a ſhort Account of it, but ſhall lay before you more at large all Thoſe Things which are contained in the proper Notion of it.

Chriſtian Faith then, as ſubſiſting in the Heart of Man, and influencing all the Affections of it, is ſuch a deep, lively and painful Senſe of the great Corruption of our Nature, of our own Vileneſs and Wretchedneſs, and our great Unworthineſs in the Sight of God, as begets in us a ſerious and awful Apprehenſion and Dread of his Diſpleaſure

pleaſure upon theſe Accounts: But then it is at the ſame Time, ſuch a ſettled and firm Belief and Perſuaſion of God's unſpeakable Love to his loſt Creatures, in ſending his Son to die for them; and of the Infinite Worth and Dignity of Chriſt's perfect Obedience, his Sufferings and his Death; and of his Readineſs to receive and to pardon returning Sinners; as produces in us the moſt devout and affectionate Senſe, and the moſt thankful Remembrance of Theſe Wonderful Mercies. And This is joined with ſuch a firm and ſteadfaſt Belief of all his Promiſes and Threatenings, as inclines and encourages us to lift up our Eyes unto Him; and to look unto Him only, for Mercy, and Compaſſion; for Pardon, and Salvation; for Strength and Aſſiſtance in the Diſcharge of our Duty; for Support and Conſolation under Afflictions; and for a plentiful Effuſion of Grace, to ſecure us from falling in the Hour of Temptation: To ſanctify, and to change our Natures; and to diſpoſe and incline our Wills to God and Goodneſs. Or, in one Word, This Faith directs us to look unto the Lord Jeſus alone, for all the Means of Virtue, and Holineſs Here; and for all our Hopes, and Expectations of Happineſs,

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and Glory hereafter. And all This is accompanied with the moſt intire and perfect Reſignation of ourſelves, our Wills and Affections to the Will of God; with a ſincere Deſire, and a ſerious and diligent Endeavour to live according to his Laws; to do his Will on Earth, as it is done in Heaven; to grow in Grace, and to work out our Salvation; and as far as is conſiſtent with the manifold Infirmities of our corrupt Nature, to *have our Converſation in Heaven*, to *be holy, as God is holy*, and *perfect, even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

This, my Brethren, is a faint Tranſcript, or an imperfect Copy of That *Chriſtian Faith*, the genuine Portraiture of which is given us at full Length in the Goſpel. 'Tis in Truth only a rude Sketch, or rough Draught of it: For there is too much Expreſſion in the Original, for any Deſcription, leſs Than that of an inſpired Pen, to reach, or equal. All that I pretend to therefore is, To give you the Outlines and the Principal Features of this Divine Piece, which are too ſtrong not to ſtrike the moſt careleſs Obſervers. But if you would ſee them filled up to the greateſt Advantage, adorned with their proper Graces, finiſhed in the higheſt Taſte,

Taſte, and done to the Life; I muſt deſire you to look into the Holy Scriptures at your Leiſure, and afterwards into your own Hearts, in your Hours of Retirement, and Meditation; when, I truſt, they will furniſh you with a lively Image of this Heavenly Virtue. SERM. XIX.

But in the mean While, I ought now to obſerve the Nature of the *Chriſtian Faith* a little more diſtinctly; by ſhewing you in the Second Place,

II.

The ſeveral Eſſential Properties of it.

But not having Time for This at preſent, I muſt beg Leave to defer it to the next Opportunity.

Now, To God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

XIX

The Eucharist Proposed to Unbelievers

I

The Eſſential Properties of the Chriſtian Faith.

A SERMON Preached at *St. Mary*'s in HAVERFORD-WEST. *Sept.* 4th. 1748.

1 JOHN v. 4.

---This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe on Theſe Words, I propoſed to ſhew I. SERM. XX.

The General Nature of the Chriſtian Faith.

II.

The ſeveral Eſſential Properties of it. And

III.

The Benefits and Advantages of it.

The Firſt of theſe Heads was the Subject of my Diſcourſe, on the laſt Lord's Day.

And I come now

II.

To ſhew the ſeveral Properties of the Chriſtian Faith.

1. The Firſt Property of the Chriſtian Faith is, That it is a Rational, and Well-Grounded

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Grounded Aſſent to the Doctrines of the Goſpel.

This Aſſent is not an Enthuſiaſtical Fancy, nor a Groundleſs Opinion; but a Rational and Well-Grounded Belief and Perſuaſion of the Truth and Certainty of them. The *Chriſtian Faith* reſts upon the Solid and Firm Foundation of Right Reaſon: And therefore it does not, by any Means, decline, or ſhun, an Impartial Enquiry, and a Fair Examination: But it freely ſubmits its Evidences to a Candid Hearing, and an Equitable Deciſion: And deſires only to ſtand, or fall, by its own Intrinſic Worth and Excellence. It has Nothing to fear at the Bar of Reaſon: Becauſe Right Reaſon is, in Truth, the Voice of God himſelf: And as God cannot poſſibly contradict himſelf; ſo neither can Divine Revelation be in any Degree repugnant or contradictory to Right Reaſon. Upon which Account, our Bleſſed Saviour, in his Diſcourſes with the *Jews*, and in his Diſputes with his inveterate Enemies, the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, does all along addreſs himſelf to their Reaſon and Underſtandings. His Arguments are all fairly drawn from the avowed Principles of Human Reaſon: His Diſcourſe proceeds, and his Concluſions

plainly follow, according to the ſtricteſt Laws and Methods of Argumentation. He does not expect, to be believed on; nor, that his Doctrines ſhould be received, and embraced by them, merely upon the Strength of his own Word: But he conſtantly appeals to the Prophecies concerning Him; and to the Miracles which he wrought publickly amongſt them; for the Divine Authority of his Miſſion; for the Proof of his being the promiſed *Meſſiah*; for the Truth of his Doctrines, the Credibility of his Declarations, and the infallible Certainty of his Promiſes and Threatenings. Thus he ſays, *The Works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame Works that I do, bear Witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.* And again, *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which teſtify of me.* When the *Jews* came round about him in *Solomon*'s Porch, *and ſaid unto him, How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt tell us plainly*: He referred them to his Miracles, for their Satisfaction in this very important Point. Jeſus anſwered them, *I told you*, that is, upon a former Occaſion, *and ye believed not: The Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witneſs*

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John v. 36.

ver. 39.

John x. 25, 24, 25.

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of me, that the Father hath ſent me. And again, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works: That ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.* It ſeems there was ſo much Force of Reaſon, and Strength of Argument in our Lord's Diſcourſe; that ſeveral of his Hearers were convinced by mere Dint of Reaſon, and the Teſtimony of his Miracles, and were converted accordingly. For St. *John* ſays, upon this Occaſion, *Many reſorted unto him, and ſaid,* John *did no Miracle: But all Things that* John *ſpake of This Man, were true.* Elſewhere our Saviour ſays to *Philip, Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or elſe believe me for the very Work's Sake.* And again, he declares the Unbelief of the *Jews* to be inexcuſable, becauſe of the mighty Works which he had wrought among them, and which were ſufficient to convince the moſt obſtinate, that he was the promiſed *Meſſiah. If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin: But now have they both ſeen and hated both me and my Father.* It is St. *Paul*'s Direction to the *Theſſalonians*, To *prove all Things*, and after thus

ver. 37, 38.

ver. 41, 42.

Chap. xiv. 11.

xv. 24.

1 Theſſ. v. 21.

hus proving them, *To hold faſt That which is good.* And St. *Peter*'s, To *be always ready to give a Reaſon of the Hope that is in us.* And St. *John*'s, To *try the Spirits, whether they be of God.* And St. *Paul* commends the *Jews* at *Berea*, and ſays, They *were more noble than thoſe at* Theſſalonica, *in that they received the Word with all Readineſs of Mind, and ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether Thoſe Things were ſo. Therefore many of them believed.*

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1 Pet. iii. 15.
1 John i. 4.
Acts xvii. 11, 12.

From theſe Paſſages you may ſee, That Believing is the Effect of a Rational and Candid Enquiry, and a Free and Impartial Examination. And, conſequently, The *Chriſtian Faith* is a Rational Aſſent, and a Well-Grounded Perſuaſion; and perfectly agreeable to the ſoundeſt Principles of Human Reaſon. And as this *Foundation of God ſtandeth ſure*: Since he always abideth faithful, and cannot deny himſelf, but continueth true to his Promiſes: Even ſo is the Faith that is built upon it firm and ſteady,

2. Which is the Second Property of it.

True Chriſtian Faith is not a wavering unſteady Principle; ſtaggered with Doubts, perplexed with Miſgivings, diſtracted with Fears and Scruples, and toſſed about with

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every Wind of Doctrine: But 'tis a ſettled and firm Perſuaſion of Mind, concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Doctrines, and the Certainty of Thoſe Promiſes and Threatenings, which are propoſed to our Aſſent, in the Writings of the New Teſtament. 'Tis a holy and ſteadfaſt Aſſurance, an humble, and an unſhaken Reliance and Dependence upon the Veracity, the Juſtice, and the Goodneſs of God.

There is indeed a weaker and lower Degree of Faith, mixed with ſome Degree of Doubt. Such was That of St. *Peter*, which our Bleſſed Saviour reproved in theſe Words, *O Thou of little Faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* Matt. xiv. 31. *Peter* had at leaſt ſome Degree of Faith and Confidence in the Power and Goodneſs of Jeſus: For otherwiſe, he would not have ventured out of the Ship, nor attempted to walk on the Water at Jeſus's Command. But it ſeems, his Faith was not a firm and ſettled Confidence and Aſſurance; but was unhappily mixed with the baſe Alloy of Wavering, and Doubting: For when he ſaw the Violence of the Wind, and the Roughneſs of the Sea, his Heart failed him; and his Natural Fears prevailed over his Faith. And therefore to convince *Peter* of the

the exceeding great Excellence, and the extraordinary Virtue and Efficacy of Faith; and the Danger of wavering in it: Jeſus withdrew his Divine Power in ſome Degree, and ſuffered the Laws of Nature to operate in ſome Meaſure; inſomuch that *Peter* began to ſink. SERM. XX.

Such an unſteady Faith as This, is by no Means a ſufficient Principle of Virtue and Piety; but muſt needs be followed by a Conduct as unequal and unſteady as That Principle from which it proceeds. For as the Spring cannot riſe higher than its firſt Source; neither can our Obedience riſe higher than That Fountain, from whence it flows. And it ſeems the Sequel of *Peter*'s Hiſtory is abundantly ſufficient to confirm the Truth of this Obſervation. And therefore it was, That our Lord, foreſeeing the ill Effects of ſo weak a Faith; eſpecially in a Perſon of *Peter*'s ſanguine and unſteady Temper, ſaid to him, juſt before his Paſſion; *I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not.* Which Words are a ſufficient Intimation, that any Defect in this Divine Principle is always accompanied with a proportionable Failure in our Duty and Obedience: And as a weak Faith always produces a very faulty, and Luke xxii. 32.

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defective Obedience; even ſo is a ſtrong and lively Faith as conſtantly productive of a ſteady and uniform Obedience to the Will and the Commandments of God.

This appears very plainly in the Hiſtory of *Abraham*; who was, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *ſtrong in Faith*. He ſhewed ſuch an implicite Belief in, and Dependence upon the Promiſes of God; and paid ſuch an intire Deference and Obedience to his Commands, that he left his *Country*, his *Kindred*, *and* his *Father's Houſe*, *to go unto a Land that the Lord ſhould ſhew him*. *And he went out*, *not knowing whither he went*. *Being not weak in Faith*, *he conſidered not his own Body now dead*, *nor the Deadneſs of* Sarah's *Womb*: *But being fully perſuaded that Nothing was too hard for God*; *that what God had promiſed*, *he was able to perform*; therefore *he ſtaggered not at the Promiſe* of having a Son in his old Age: But *againſt Hope*, *believed in Hope*. *Abraham* readily ſacrificed all the Doubts and Scruples of carnal Reaſoning *to the Obedience of Faith*; reſolving all into the Veracity, the Power, and the Goodneſs of God: As knowing infallibly, upon the ſureſt Principles of Knowledge: That *with God all Things are poſſible*. By Virtue of the ſame Divine Faith,

Gen. xii. 1.
Heb. xi. 8.
Rom. iv. 19.
ver. 21.
Jer. xxxii. 17.
Matt. xix. 26.

Faith, *Abraham, when he was tried, offered up* Iſaac; *accounting that God was able to raiſe him up even from the Dead.* *Abraham* wiſely concluded, That the ſame Divine Power, which gave him This Son, at a Time of Life; when, according to the Courſe of Nature, it was impoſſible for him to have Iſſue; was abundantly ſufficient to reſtore him to Life again. Becauſe, the ſame Power, which gives Life at Firſt, is equally able to reſtore it: The reſtoring of Life being no more than giving it a ſecond Time: And He that gives it once, can certainly as well give it Twice, or twenty Times, as once. By thus repoſing himſelf, with the moſt intire Confidence, upon the Promiſes of God; he *gave Glory to God*, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it: That is, he diſcovered the juſteſt Notions, and the worthieſt Apprehenſions of God's Nature, and his Attributes; of his Wiſdom, and his Power; his Veracity, and Unchangeableneſs; his Juſtice, and his Goodneſs. *Abraham*, like all the other Noble Worthies recorded by the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and was perſuaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed*, like them, *that he was*

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Heb. xi. 17, 19.

Rom. iv. 20.

Chap. xi. 13.

SERM. XX. *a Stranger and Pilgrim on the Earth.* This is what the ſame Author calls, in the Firſt Verſe of the ſame Chapter; in the moſt emphatical Manner, *The Subſtance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not ſeen.* ver. 22. And in the former Chapter, A *full Aſſurance of Faith.*

The Eye of Faith can deſcry from afar Thoſe glorious Objects; which the Doctrines of the Goſpel recommend to our Notice and Aſſent. This Divine Perſpective brings into our View Thoſe Things, which are in themſelves inviſible, and out of the Reach of our Bodily Senſes: And it gives, as it were, a preſent Being, and Subſiſtence, to That, which, to the Carnal Mind, ſeems to lie at a great Diſtance.

And if we look into the Hiſtory of St. *Paul*'s Life, we ſhall find towards the Cloſe of it, the ſame *full Aſſurance of Faith*; and the ſame intire Dependence and Reliance upon the Truth and Certainty of the Divine Promiſes. When this Great Apoſtle was now brought before *Nero*, the ſecond Time: When he was *now ready to be offered, and the Time of his Departure was at Hand:* Behold, with what a Holy Confidence, and undaunted Reſolution, he looks, through the Veil

Veil of Death, into the World of Spirits; and to That exceeding Great and Glorious Reward, which was reſerved for him There againſt his Coming. But when we conſider the Grounds that he went upon; we ſhall have no Reaſon to wonder at That Noble Boldneſs, which This Chriſtian Hero diſcovers upon this very awful and trying Occaſion. SERM. XX.

Neverthelefs, ſays he, *I am not aſhamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am perſuaded that He is able to keep That which I have committed unto him, againſt that Day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the Righteous Judge ſhall give me at That Day. iv. 7, 8.

From all which Inſtances we ſee, That the *Chriſtian Faith* is a Rational Aſſent: And as ſuch, a Firm and Well-Grounded Perſuaſion of Mind, concerning the Promiſes and Threatenings of the Goſpel. It is a ſettled and unſhaken Aſſurance, and perfectly fixed, and immoveable, like That Foundation on which it ſtands. *I know*, ſays the Apoſtle, *Whom I have believed.* And this leads me to the Third Property of the Chriſtian Faith, which is,

3. 'That

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3. * 'That Conſent of the Will, and Concurrence of the Heart, which is ſubſequent 'to the Aſſent of the Intellect, and founded 'upon it.' As a late very Learned and Worthy Prelate of our Siſter-Church expreſſes himſelf.

There is a Conſent of the Will previouſly neceſſary even to the Aſſent of the Intellect. For, as This very judicious Author obſerves, † 'The Influence of the *Will* upon the Aſſent 'of the Intellect to Truths capable of *Moral* '*Evidence* only, is ſo great, that if Men were 'once well enough inclined to Morality and '*Natural* Religion, to wiſh the *Goſpel* and 'all the Doctrines and *Precepts* in it were 'true; they would ſoon diſcern the pre-'vailing Strength of that Moral Evidence 'which *claims* and *demands* the Aſſent of 'the Underſtanding; as Chriſt himſelf ob-'ſerves, *John* vii. 17. ἐάν τις θέλῃ, *If any* '*Man is willing*, or *diſpoſed*, to *Do* the Will 'of God, whatever it appears to be, *He* '*ſhall KNOW of the Doctrine whether it* '*be of God? Or whether I ſpeak of myſelf?* 'But when Men are biaſſed and blinded by

* *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Underſtanding.* Chap. 6. Page 253.

† *Idem Ibidem.* Page 251.

their

'their Immoralities and Violations of *Natural* SERM.
'Religion; then the plaineſt Evidence even XX.
'of *Senſation* for the Truth of any Doctrine
'may be *evaded*; as the *Jews* evaded the
'Senſitive Evidence of *Miracles* for our
'Saviour's Divine Miſſion; nay, tho' they
'called them *Miracles*, yet they attributed
'the Power by which they were wrought
'to *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils:—'
So neceſſary is Impartiality, and Ingenuity of Mind, to the receiving, and entertaining the plaineſt, and moſt important Truths. And it is certain, even to a Proverb; That we eaſily believe That to be true; which we, Firſt of all, wiſh may prove to be ſo. But beſide this previous Conſent of the Will, there is likewiſe a ſubſequent Conſent of it, and a ſincere Concurrence of the Heart and Affections.

When a Perſon, of an ingenuous Turn of Mind, is duely convinced of the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation; and of the Divine Authority of its Doctrines, and Precepts, then he readily and naturally acquieſces in it: And, like the Dove, which Noah *ſent forth* out of the Ark; *finding no Reſt* for his Soul in all the doubtful Reaſonings, the fine-ſpun Schemes, and the *enticing Words of Man's* 1 Cor. ii. *Wiſdom*: 4.

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Wiſdom: He *returns*, with Joy and Eagerneſs, to his God; from whom he had departed. And being by his Grace made a *Partaker of Chriſt*, he *holds the Beginning of* his *Confidence ſtedfaſt unto the End.* He *embraces* the Promiſes of the Goſpel with the moſt ſincere and ardent Affection: He joyfully cloſes in with Thoſe gracious Offers, and merciful Tenders of Pardon and Happineſs, which it makes unto him: He accepts of them, with the utmoſt Thankfulneſs and Gratitude: He entertains the moſt lively Hope, and earneſt Expectation of them; and yields the moſt ready and chearful Obedience to all that is commanded and enjoined in it. Thus it is ſaid of Thoſe faithful Servants of God, who *died in Faith, not having received the Promiſes; but having ſeen them afar off*; That they *were perſuaded of them, and embraced them.* They joyfully acquieſced in them, and relied upon the Truth and Certainty of them, with the utmoſt Aſſurance of Faith, and *Complacency of Mind*; as the Original Word * Ἀσπασάμενοι ſignifies.

Heb. iii. 14.

xi. 13.

And

* Ἀσπασάμενοι, *ſaluting, kiſſing*, or *embracing the Promiſes.* Salutantes: Metaphora, ut videtur, à navigantibus, qui portum eminus conſpicati, lætis acclamationibus ſalutant, et

And Thoſe faithful Chriſtians, *who receive the Word* of God *with Joy*, who *embrace* the Promiſes of the Goſpel; with the ſincereſt, and moſt cordial Affection; will be naturally diſpoſed to give a Serious, and a Fixed Attention to Thoſe Great and Glorious Objects of the Chriſtian Faith; which is, SERM. XX.

4. The Fourth Eſſential Property of it.

The Chriſtian Faith brings conſtantly to our Minds; and ſets before us, in the moſt lively and affecting Manner, the Things of another Life. It does, by Way of Anticipation, give us a Sort of Foretaſte of the Joys and Glories of the Beatific Viſion. And for this Reaſon it is, with a Peculiar Propriety of Speech, ſaid of our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, in his Human Capacity; that *For the Joy that was ſet before him, he endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the Shame*; which he was forced to ſubmit to, in the Diſcharge of his Mediatorial Office. Heb. xii. 2.

This clear Foreſight, and anxious Deſire of our Glorified State, is by St. *Paul* called *The earneſt Expectation of the Creature*; Rom. viii. 19.

et contingere gaudent. *Paræus* in Loc. *Leigh's Critica ſacra, in Verbo* Ασπάζομαι.

Ἀσπάζεσθαι,——τὸ χαίρειν τινὶ ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀγαπᾶν. καὶ φιλοφρονεῖσθαι. Gaudere aliquâ *re* ſimpliciter. Et amare. Diligere. Amicè excipere. Amplecti. Salutare. *Suidas in Verbo.*

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which *waits* with a Sort of Religious Impatience *for the Manifestation of the Sons of God*. 'Twas This ravishing Foretaste of the Joys of Heaven, that made him *reckon all the Sufferings of This present Life not worthy to be compared with the Glory which*, was then soon to *be revealed in him*. 'Twas this that enabled him to *walk by Faith, and not by Sight*; to overlook, and to disregard *the Things which are seen*, and to extend his View to those Things which are not to be seen with the Eyes of Flesh. Thus it is said of *Moses*, that *he had Respect unto the Recompence of Reward*. He fixed his Attention upon it, and kept it constantly in View.

Heb. xi. 26.

And it is observable, that Those Cautions, and Directions of our Blessed Saviour, to his Disciples; *To take Heed*, and *To beware*; and Those Exhortations of the Apostles to their Converts, *To take Heed to themselves, To their Doctrine, To the Flock of Christ*, and so forth; are so many figurative Expressions, borrowed from That earnest and eager Look of Desire, and Expectation; which any One in great Extremity and Distress fastens upon a Person; in whom he places all his Hopes, and all his Confidence. For which Reason, they must necessarily be supposed

poſed to ſignify an earneſt Application of Thought, and a fixed and ſettled Attention of Mind, as the Original Word, * Προσέχω, properly implies. SERM. XX.

To this Purpoſe St. *Paul* exhorts the *Hebrew* Converts, To *give the more earneſt Heed to the Things which they had heard, leſt at any Time they ſhould let them ſlip.* It ſeems their *Holding faſt their Profeſſion*, and their Living ſuitably to it, depended intirely upon a Serious and Settled Attention *to the Things* which *they had heard.* And to ſay the Truth, a Religious Attention to the Doctrines of the Goſpel is, if I may ſo ſpeak, the very Life and Soul of the Chriſtian Faith; as This is of the Chriſtian Life. Unleſs we keep Thoſe Great and Glorious Objects conſtantly in our Eye; we cannot poſſibly *walk by Faith* and *have our Converſation in Heaven.* The very Moment we loſe Sight of them, we loſe Sight of our Duty at the ſame Time. This devout Attention is an Eſſential Property of the Chriſtian Faith. There is an inſeparable Connection between Faith and Practice: And all the Sin and Wickedneſs, which Heb. ii. 1.

* Προσέχειν. ἐπιμελῶς πηρεῖν. ὅπως οἱ πολέμιοι παῦτα προσέχοιεν τὸν νεῦν. Attendant. Accurate ſervent, *ac obſervent.* Ut Hoſtes huc mentem advertant. *i. e. Hoc attentè perpendant. Suidas in Verbo.*

we

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we ſee in the World, proceeds intirely from the Weakneſs and Deadneſs of Faith; and from the Want of This Religious Attention to the Doctrines of the Goſpel: Which can only be cheriſhed, and kept alive; by a careful Reading of, and Meditating upon the Holy Scriptures; by conſidering ourſelves, *as Strangers and Pilgrims* in This World; by looking up frequently to Heaven; and *ſetting God always before us*; and walking Daily, as in his Preſence. Without all This, There is no ſuch Thing as being truely Holy in This Life, nor Happy in the Next. And This brings me to the Fifth Property of the Chriſtian Faith, which is,

Pſa. xvi. 8.

5. That it is always productive of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs of Life.

Chriſtian Faith is a lively active Principle; that naturally exerts, and puts itſelf forth, in a regular and uniform Courſe of virtuous and good Actions. It is, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, a *Faith which worketh by Love*. It is ſuch a Serious and Firm Belief of, and ſuch a Fixed and Settled Attention to, the Doctrines of the Goſpel; together with ſuch an inviolable Regard to all the Precepts of it; as naturally diſpoſes and inclines us, to make all poſſible Returns to God for his ineſtimable Mercies

Gal. v. 6.

to

to us in Chriſt Jeſus. 'Tis what the Apoſtle calls *a Work of Faith, and Labour of Love, and Patience of Hope in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* 'Tis ſuch a Faith as is fruitful of Good Works; ſuch as conſtantly labours and ſtrives, by all poſſible Ways and Means, to ſhew the moſt ardent and unfeigned Love of God and our Neighbour: Such a Faith in God's Promiſes, and ſuch a firm and unſhaken Hope of enjoying them, in his due Time; as enables us, with Patience and Perſeverance, to wade through all Thoſe Difficulties and Diſcouragements, which we often meet with, in the Diſcharge of our Duty. As the ſame Apoſtle ſays elſewhere, *If we hope for That we ſee not, then do we with Patience wait for it.* Our *Patience muſt have her perfect Work; That* ſo we *may be perfect and intire, wanting Nothing.* We muſt not *be weary, nor faint in our Minds*; when we are beſet with Difficulties and Diſcouragements: But we muſt *hold the Beginning of our Confidence ſtedfaſt unto the End:* For it is written, *If any Man draw back, my Soul ſhall have no Pleaſure in him.* Therefore we muſt not be *ſlothful in Buſineſs*; but *fervent in Spirit:* That ſo, by *ſerving the Lord*; we may *be Followers of them,*

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1 Theſſ. i. 3. Rom. viii. 25. James i. 4. Heb. xii. 3. iii. 14. x. 38. Rom xii. 11. Heb. vi. 12.

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who, through Faith and Patience, inherit the Promiſes. Unleſs we do ſo, our Faith will profit us nothing; we cannot poſſibly be ſaved by it. For, as St. *James* obſerves,

ii. 17. *Faith, if it hath not Works, is dead being*

ver. 22. *alone.* And again, *By Works is Faith made perfect:* * Faith is the Great Root of the Chriſtian Life: And if there be any Life in the Root; Good Works will naturally grow, and branch out of it. But where Theſe do not ſpring from it; 'Tis a plain and certain Sign, that the Root is dead; that the Vital Principle of the Spiritual Life is perfectly extinguiſhed: And then our Faith, as being deſtitute of One of the moſt Eſſential Properties of it, is utterly worthleſs and unprofitable. For, as the ſame Apoſtle re-

ver. 26. marks, *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, ſo Faith without Works is dead alſo.*

* Concedimus nihilominus, alio reſpectu Fidem ipſam charitate atque adeò aliis omnibus virtutibus ſuperiorem evadere, in hoc. ſc. quod aliorum operum omnium RADIX ac Fundamentum ſit, et quaſi mater cæterarum Virtutum; non quod eas neceſſariò pariat, ſed quod parere apta nata ſit, quin etiam ſi vis ejus crebrâ ac ſeriâ conſideratione excitetur, et quaſi foveatur, tantum non certò producat: (Qui enim rebus Evangelii tum firmo aſſenſu credit, tum attento eas Animo expendit, pene impoſſibile eſt, ut is non pius exinde evadat) denique quod nulla Virtus in homine exiitere poſſit, quæ non ex hujus Fidei quaſi utero prodeat. *Bulli Harm. Apoſt. Diſſ. Prior.* Cap. 2. S. 10.

But

But when the Chriſtian Faith is accompanied with Good Works, with Uniform and Univerſal Obedience, as it always is; when it is ſincere, and *unfeigned*; at St. *Paul* terms it: Yet even in this Caſe, the faithful Chriſtian does not preſume upon his own Righteouſneſs, nor place any Manner of Truſt and Confidence in his own Performances: But, which is the Sixth Property of the Chriſtian Faith, SERM. XX. 1 Tim. i. 5.

6. * He gives all the Glory to God, and hopes for Salvation, only through the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt.

There is ſuch a Mixture of Imperfection in our beſt Services; that they ſtand in Need of all the gracious Allowances which a Merciful and Good God can poſſibly make. And if, when we *have done all thoſe Things*

* Quia vero promiſſio Vitæ æternæ, in Evangelio facta, in Meritoriâ Jeſu Chriſti Satisfactione, fundata eſt, ac ſanguine ipſius pretioſiſſimo ſancita, ideò *Fidei obedientia perpetuò reſpicit ad Chriſtum, tanquam ad unicum Propitiatorem*; cujus tam in vitâ, quam in morte, perfectiſſima obedientia ſola effecerit, ut imperfecta et languida noſtra obedientia Deo ad ſalutem placeat, vitæque æternæ præmium reportet. Rectè igitur Melanchton in locis præcipuis Theologicis de voce Fidei: *Cum dicimus Fide juſtificamur, monſtramus Filium Dei ſedentem ad dextram Patris interpellantem pro nobis; propter hunc dicimus nobis donari reconciliationem, detrahimus meritum noſtris virtutibus quæcunque aſſunt.* Atque hâc ratione Evangelica Obedientia, Fidei nomine expreſſa, eam obedientiam, eaque opera omnia excludit, quæ gratuitæ promiſſioni fiduciæque in Chriſto Mediatore repugnant, hoc eſt, quæ cum fiduciâ et opinione meriti noſtri fiunt. *Bulli Harm. Apoſt. Diſſ. Poſt.* Cap. 5. § 5.

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which are commanded us, *we are*, at beſt, but *unprofitable Servants*; and *have done* only *That which was our Duty to do:* Surely there can be no poſſible Occaſion for Boaſting, or a preſumptuous Reliance upon our own Righteouſneſs. Becauſe, we are ſo far from doing more than our Duty; that we do not even ſo much as we are able to do. We might be, all of us, more juſt and charitable, more humble and forgiving, more patient and contented, more pure and holy, and more ſpiritual and heavenly-minded than the very beſt of us are: And if God were to *enter into* ſtrict *Judgment* with us; and *to be extreme to mark* every Thing we do amiſs; and to deal with us according to our Deſerts: There could no Fleſh be juſtified in his Sight, nor able to ſtand in his Preſence. And, as for That little Pittance of Holineſs which we have; it is intirely the Gift of God. For *It is God which worketh in us both to will, and to do of his good Pleaſure.*

Luke xvii. 10.

Phil. ii. 13.

Since therefore it is God only, that *maketh us to differ* from the Reſt of the World: And ſince we have Nothing that is good, but What we have *received* at his Hands; we muſt not preſume to *glory, as if we had not received it.* But, as the Apoſtle ſays, *He that*

1 Cor. iv. 7.

i. 31.

2 Cor. x. 17.

that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For by Grace are we ſaved, through Faith; and That not of ourſelves, it is the Gift of God: Not of Works, leſt any Man ſhould boaſt. Eph. ii. 8, 9. SERM. XX.

Well then may we ſay in the Words of the Prophet, *Surely in the Lord have I Righteouſneſs and Strength.* In the Lord Jeſus ſhall all faithful Chriſtians be juſtified, and ſhall glory. For he is, truely ſpeaking, *The Lord our Righteouſneſs.* He *is of God made unto us Wiſdom, and Righteouſneſs, and Sanctification, and Redemption.* For *there is no Salvation in any Other: There is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we muſt be ſaved.* Iſai. xlv. 24. Jer. xxiii. 6. 1 Cor. i. 30. Acts iv. 12.

Theſe are the Sentiments of every devout and faithful Chriſtian, who with the greateſt Self-Abaſement and Humility of Spirit, *caſts down* every proud *Imagination* that *magnifies itſelf againſt the Lord, and every high Thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the Knowledge of God, and bringeth into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt.* For, *Shall the Axe boaſt itſelf againſt Him that heweth therewith? Or ſhall the Saw magnify itſelf againſt Him that ſhaketh it? As if the Rod ſhould ſhake itſelf againſt Them that lift it up, or as if the Staff ſhould lift up itſelf,* 2 Cor. x. 5. Iſai. x. 15.

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as if it were no Wood. This be far from the faithful Chriſtian! Nay, he is ſo far from it; That when he conſiders the many Failings and Miſcarriages of his Life, and the manifold Defects of his beſt Services;

Jer. iii. 25. *He lies down in his Shame, and his Confuſion covereth him; becauſe he hath ſinned againſt the Lord:* As the Prophet elegantly expreſſeth it. And therefore he ſays with Holy *Daniel,*

Dan. ix. 7. *O Lord, Righteouſneſs belongeth unto Thee, but unto me Confuſion of Face.* Or elſe, with the poor Publican, *God be merciful unto me a Sinner.* Thus it is that he laments and bemoans the Corruption of his Nature, and the Sins of his Life. And the Senſe of both together is ſo very afflicting, that it would even overwhelm him; were it not for That comfortable Proſpect, That bright Sunſhine and *full Aſſurance of Faith and Hope*; which his Belief in, and Dependence upon the Merits of the Bleſſed Jeſus, does at all Times furniſh him with. For, notwithſtanding that he has the moſt lively and pungent Senſe of his Unworthineſs and Guilt on the one Hand; yet has he on the other, namely

Eph. iii. 12. Rom. v. 1. in Jeſus Chriſt, *Boldneſs, and Acceſs with Confidence by the Faith of him.* Becauſe, *being juſtified by Faith, he has Peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Such is the peculiar Excellence of This Heavenly Gift, That it hath in it, in God's Account, and by Virtue of his gracious Acceptation of it, through the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt; and in Conſequence of our Bleſſed Saviour's own Promiſe; a Degree of Righteouſneſs, and a Fœderal Claim or Title to Juſtification, SERM. XX. Mark xvi. 16.

7. Which is the Seventh and laſt Property of the Chriſtian Faith.

There is Some-What in a lively active Faith, that neceſſarily implies a right Diſpoſition of Mind; a Sincerity, and Uprightneſs of Intentions; a Rectitude of Will; a Purity of Affections; and a Simplicity, and Integrity of Manners. It implies a due Opinion and a deep Senſe of own Weakneſs and Unworthineſs; and right Notions of God, his Nature, and his Attributes; an utter Diſclaiming of our own Righteouſneſs, and a flying for Shelter, from God's Wrath, to the Merits and Satisfaction, and the Mediation and Interceſſion of the Bleſſed Jeſus. And it implies farther, a thankful and affectionate Remembrance of God's wonderful Mercies vouchſafed to us in Chriſt; and a ſerious Deſire, and an earneſt and conſtant Endeavour, to live ſuitably to Theſe Convictions and Obligations.

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By thus helping us, To make a due Eſtimate of ourſelves, and our own Performances; to entertain juſt Sentiments, and ſuitable Apprehenſions of the Divine Majeſty; and to ſet a proper Value upon That Great Propitiatory Sacrifice of *Chriſt crucified*, by convincing us of our Obligations to the Divine Goodneſs on This Account more particularly; by enflaming our Affections with the moſt devout and thankful Senſe of this ineſtimable Love; and by promoting and ſpurring us on to live in ſome Meaſure anſwerably to theſe Engagements: I ſay, Faith has by This Means, and upon Theſe Accounts, a Sort of Righteouſneſs in it. For, as God is too juſt, and too good, to require more of us than we are able to do: Even ſo, when we uſe our beſt Endeavours to ſerve him, and to pleaſe him; He cannot but look upon us, for the Sake of Chriſt, with ſome Degree of Complacency and Approbation. And, as * *Seneca* obſerves of a Brave Man, ſorely matched with Adverſity, and nobly bearing up under it, that he is a Sight worthy of God's Notice; even then, when he is moſt intent upon the Works of Creation and

* Ecce Spectaculum dignum, ad quod reſpiciat intentus operi ſuo Deus: Ecce par Deo dignum, Vir fortis cum malâ fortunâ compoſitus. *Seneca de Provid.* Cap. 3.

Providence:

Providence: Even ſo may we ſay, That when a Man makes the beſt Uſe he can of his Rational Faculties, and his free Powers: When he ſearches diligently after Truth, with a ſincere Deſire of finding it, and acting ſuitably to it: When he carefully diveſts himſelf of every foreign Prejudice, and unreaſonable Partiality: When he maturely conſiders all the Evidences that are offered in Behalf of it: When he weighs them, with great Care and Exactneſs: When he willingly yields his Aſſent, and ſacrifices all his former Doubts and Scruples, to the ſuperior Strength and Force of Conviction: When he gives free Admiſſion to Thoſe Truths, which come thus powerfully recommended, and ſtrongly ſupported: And when he ſeriouſly and earneſtly endeavours to adjuſt all his Behaviour in ſuch a Manner as may be agreeable to ſuch a reaſonable Conviction, and firm Perſuaſion of Mind: I ſay, when a Man proceeds, and acts in This Manner, he does all that can reaſonably be expected of him; and all that God himſelf requires at his Hands. SERM. XX.

There is ſomething very excellent and amiable in ſuch a Character as This is: And a Perſon of This happy Turn of Mind is in ſome Senſe worthy to be looked upon with

Complacency

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Complacency and Approbation, by the Great Lord of Heaven and Earth. And accordingly we find, that the Character of *Nathanael* in the Goſpel was ſo far of This Sort, and had ſuch an intrinſic Beauty and Excellence in it; That it engaged the Notice and Attention of the Bleſſed Jeſus himſelf: And drew from Him This extraordinary Commendation: *Behold an honeſt* Iſraelite *indeed, in whom there is no Guile!* Of the ſame ingenuous Turn of Mind was the Patriarch *Abraham*, whoſe Faith has been already deſcribed; and which met with the moſt remarkable Approbation and Acceptance from God himſelf. For *Moſes* tells us, *That* Abraham *believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for Righteouſneſs.*

John i. 47.

Gen. xv. 6.

The Chriſtian Faith then hath a very particular Virtue in it; and a Degree of Righteouſneſs, even in God's Account: And, in Conſequence of our Bleſſed Saviour's Promiſe, a Fœderal Claim, or Title to Juſtification. I ſay, a Fœderal Claim: Becauſe, all its Virtue is derived from the precious Merits of Chriſt, which give an extraordinary Worth and Efficacy to it. And that it really has ſuch a ſovereign Quality in it, is plain from our Lord's Commiſſion to his Apoſtles after his

his Reſurrection. *And he ſaid unto them, go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel unto every Creature: He that believeth, and is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved.* SERM. XX. Mark xvi. 16.

This Point is equally plain from ſeveral other Paſſages of Scripture; too many to enumerate at this Time. St. *Paul* ſays, *By him all that believe are juſtified from all Things, from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of* Moſes. And again, *The Juſt ſhall live by Faith.* And again, *Therefore we conclude, that a Man is juſtified by Faith, without the Deeds of the Law.* And ſo in ſeveral other Parts of this Epiſtle; in the Epiſtles to the *Corinthians*, the *Galatians*, *Epheſians*, and That to the *Hebrews*. Acts xiii. 39. Rom. i. 17. iii. 28.

Having thus repreſented to you at large, the General Nature of the Chriſtian Faith; and likewiſe ſhewn diſtinctly the Several Eſſential Properties of it: Nothing now remains; but that I do, in the Third and laſt Place,

III.

Lay before you the Several Benefits and Advantages of it.

But This muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now,

SERM. XX. Now, To God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghost; be ascribed all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The Benefits and Advantages of the Chriſtian Faith.

A SERMON Preached at *St. Mary*'s in HAVERFORD-WEST. *Sept.* 11th. 1748.

1 JOHN v. 4.

---This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

IN my Two laſt Diſcourſes on Theſe Words, I laid before you, SERM. XXI.

I.

The General Nature of the Chriſtian Faith.

II.

I ſhewed you diſtinctly the Several Eſſential Properties of it.

And I come now in the Third and laſt Place,

III.

To ſet forth the Several Benefits and Advantages of it.

The

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The First Benefit and Advantage of our Faith is That mentioned in my Text; that it helps and enables us, to overcome the World. *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.*

The great Corruption of our Nature, the prevailing Force of Vicious Habits, the many Allurements of the World, the powerful Influence of bad Examples, and the various Wiles and Stratagems of our Grand Adversary, the Devil; have all of them a very unfriendly Aspect on a Course of Virtue and Piety; and place us in Circumstances of some Difficulty and Danger. But though our Situation may minister some Occasion for Watchfulness and Caution, for Diligence and Resolution, yet it is such notwithstanding as affords us all possible Encouragement: And if we do but use our best Endeavours, and fight manfully under Christ's Banner, against Sin, the World, and the Devil; we have the strongest Assurances given us; That we shall finally surmount all Difficulties, triumph over all Opposition, and be *in all Things more than Conquerers, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* For his *Grace is sufficient for us*, and his *Strength made perfect in* our *Weakness.*

Rom. viii. 37.

2 Cor. xii. 9.

When

When we find ourſelves ſtrongly beſet with Temptations of any Sort; we muſt *take unto us the whole Armour of God: That ſo we may be able to withſtand in the evil Day, and having done all to ſtand.* We muſt be ſure to *take the Shield of Faith*; for this will enable us to *quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked.* We muſt *take the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* And that theſe our faithful Endeavours may be crowned with Succeſs, we muſt *pray always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all Perſeverance.* This is the only effectual Armour againſt Sin; and when uſed faithfully, 'tis Proof to all the Aſſaults of Satan. For, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *The Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but Mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds:* And if we are only *ſtedfaſt in the Faith*, and *reſiſt the Devil* in this Manner, St. *James* aſſures us for our Comfort, that *he will fly from us.*

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Eph. vi. 13.

ver. 16.

ver. 17.

ver. 18.

2 Cor. x. 4.

iv. 7.

And indeed Faith has a Sort of natural Efficiency, to preſerve us from Sin, and to encourage us to Perſeverance in the Diſcharge of our Duty. For it enables us to make a due Eſtimate of This World, and the

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the Things of it, and to ſet a proper Value upon the Things of the Next Life; to bring them nearer to our View; to give them, as it were, a preſent Being and Subſiſtence; to fix our Attention, and faſten our Affections upon them; and to make them the governing Principles of our Lives.

When Temptations beſet us; when our Luſts, and our own wicked Hearts tempt us to Sin; when *Sinners entice* us; when the World flatters and allures us; and when the Devil aſſaults us with his moſt refined Art and Subtlety: Then Faith, like a friendly Champion, ſteps in to our Aſſiſtance. It enlightens our Underſtandings, and aſſiſts and guides our Judgments; it cleanſes our Hearts, and purifies our Affections; it diſpoſes and inclines our Wills, fortifies our Reſolutions, quickens our Diligence, ſeconds our Endeavours, influences all our Behaviour; and, by this Means, enables us to *overcome the World*, the Fleſh, and the Devil.

There is a certain *Deceitfulneſs* in *Sin*, as St. *Paul* calls it; which Nothing but a lively and vigorous Faith can poſſibly get the better of. There are few People ſo deſperately wicked as to chuſe Evil for its own Sake. By far the greateſt Part of Mankind, when they

Heb. iii. 13.

they engage in wrong Purſuits, do it under the Semblance and Appearance of Good. If they propoſe to themſelves bad Ends, or purſue good Ends by unjuſtifiable Means; it is, generally ſpeaking, becauſe they are blinded by their Paſſions, and thereby miſtaken in their Judgments; and ſo tempted to look upon ſuch Things as making up a Part of their Happineſs at leaſt, if not the Whole of it: And then 'tis no Wonder, if they form bad Deſigns, and in Conſequence of this, fall into vicious Practices. Thus it is, that the thoughtleſs Libertine places the Whole of his Happineſs in preſent Pleaſure and Satisfaction; and greedily catches at every flattering Appearance of ſenſual Delight, without regarding what may be the Conſequence of ſuch an unbounded Gratification of his Appetites: And, like the poor Prodigal in the Goſpel, he is ſo intirely bent upon a voluptuous Life; that he never ſuſpects the Folly of his Choice, nor diſcovers the fatal Tendency of it; till ſuch Time as it has brought him into the utmoſt Extremity; and placed him upon the very Brink of Deſtruction. And indeed it would be impoſſible, that a Perſon, ſo intirely devoted to Pleaſure, ſhould ever engage in Courſes

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which lead to Eternal Misery and Torment; if he were not miserably blinded and deceived beforehand. But herein, as I said before, the great Power of Sin consists, That it first deceives, and then ruins us. And thus it was that *Eve* excused herself by saying, *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* And St. *Paul* observes, That *the Serpent beguiled* Eve *through his Subtilty.* And in the *Revelation* it is said of Satan, That *he shall go out to deceive the Nations.* And it seems that This Apostate Spirit presumed so far upon his Art of deceiving, that he even attempted to deceive and seduce our Blessed Saviour himself; when he *shewed him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them,* as St. *Matthew* tells us. From all which Passages of Scripture, it is abundantly plain and clear, That the great Power of Sin consists in the exceeding great Delusion and *Deceitfulness* of it. And on the other Hand, the extraordinary Power and Efficacy of Faith consists in This, That it detects and lays open this Delusion, and thereby strikes at the very Root of Sin.

Gen. iii. 13.

2 Cor. xi. 3.

Rev. xx. 8.

Chap. iv. 8, 9.

The Eye of Faith looks upon all the Pleasures, the Riches, and the little Honours of This Lower World, as a Visionary fantastick

Scene,

Scene, that will, within the Compaſs of a very few Years, intirely ſhift and diſappear. It deſpiſes all the flattering deluſive Appearances of it, and beholds with Indifference the gawdy Trappings, and the idle Pageantry of State and Grandeur. It ſtrips them of all their thin Diſguiſes, their glittering Tinſel, and falſe Varniſh: It ſets them forth to us in all their native Emptineſs and Vanity; and begets in us the moſt ſerious and ſettled Conviction, That 'Tis all Illuſion, and Enchantment. And to ſecure us the more effectually from being deceived by their falſe Appearances; It does likewiſe ſet before us, in the moſt lively and affecting Manner, the Things of another Life. What the carnal Man looks upon as afar off, and as very little worthy of his Notice and Attention; the Faithful Chriſtian conſiders with the greateſt Serioufneſs of Attention, as if it were actually preſent with him. He wiſely foreſees, That What is now Future, and as it were, at a great Diſtance from him; will nevertheleſs, ſooner or later, be actually and intimately preſent with him: And therefore he thinks himſelf as nearly intereſted and concerned in That Period of his Being, as he is in the preſent Moment. He conſiders, That he

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must give a ſtrict Account of his Behaviour Here: And therefore, whenever he is tempted, he looks ſtedfaſtly with the Eye of Faith to the Promiſes and Threatenings of the Goſpel: And with Theſe he does, by God's Grace, manfully ſtem the rapid Torrent, and counterbalance the impetuous Force of the moſt violent Temptations. Thus it is, that he *walks by Faith, not by Sight*: And as all our Ideas of Things are naturally comparative; he wiſely judges, That there is no Proportion between the fading Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a Seaſon; and Thoſe unſpeakable Rivers of Pleaſure, which are at God's Right Hand for ever-more. Or, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *For I reckon that the Sufferings of this preſent Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* Having ſuch great and precious Promiſes in View, and being full of This Hope, he does, by the Help of God's Grace, *fight the good Fight* of Faith, *cleanſe himſelf from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfect Holineſs in the Sight of God, overcome the World*, and in the End *lay Hold on Eternal Life.*

Rom. viii. 18.

2. The Second great Benefit and Advantage of the Chriſtian Faith is, That it puts

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us upon aiming at ſtill greater Degrees of Perfection, and upon making daily Advances and Improvements in the Ways of Virtue and Piety; which is a ſtill farther Security againſt falling into Sin. SERM. XXI.

The Faithful Chriſtian never thinks he has done enough, ſo long as it is poſſible for him to do more. *The Love of God is ſhed abroad in his Heart* to ſuch a Degree; and he has ſuch an affectionate Senſe, and thankful Remembrance of What the Bleſſed Jeſus has done, and ſuffered for him; That he thinks, he can never do enough for ſuch a merciful and loving Saviour. He knows likewiſe at the ſame Time, That there is no ſuch Thing as being at a Stand in the Chriſtian Life; That he muſt either go forward, or backward; either gain Ground, or loſe it. And therefore he does not look upon himſelf, as if he *had already attained, either were already perfect*; *But This One Thing he does, forgetting Thoſe Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto Thoſe Things which are before, He preſſes toward the Mark for the Prize of the High Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.* And thus it is, That he *grows in Grace*, and goes on from one Degree of Perfection to another; till ſuch Time as he comes

Rom. v. 5.

Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.

comes unto a perfect Man, unto the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.

Eph. iv. 13.

3. The next ſignal Advantage of our Faith is, That it adminiſters the moſt powerful Support and Conſolation under Afflictions.

The many various Inſtances of Miſery and Wretchedneſs, which we ſee in the World, are by no Means the Effect of Chance, or a fatal Neceſſity: But are either the natural Conſequences of an indiſcreet Conduct, or an imprudent Management of our Affairs: Or elſe, they come upon us by the ſpecial Permiſſion, and Appointment of Divine Providence: And are deſigned either for the Exerciſe and Trial of our Patience, for the Correction of what is amiſs in us; to rouſe us out of our Sins; to awaken us to a Senſe of God, and Religion; to bring us Home to our Heavenly Father; to wean, and draw off our Affections from This World, and the Things of it; to convince us that his Favour and Diſpleaſure are not to be eſtimated by What befals his Creatures in This World; and that This Life, conſequently, is a State of Trial, and by no Means, a fit Time, or Place, for Retribution of Rewards and Puniſhments. Theſe are the Lights, in which

which every ſenſible and faithful Chriſtian looks upon the Calamities and Afflictions of This our frail and Mortal State. And therefore, if at any Time he is exerciſed by them; he conſiders, whether they are not originally owing to ſome Indiſcretion, or Miſconduct of his own. If they are, he does not preſume to accuſe the Divine Providence unjuſtly, nor to *charge God fooliſhly*: But he patiently ſits down under them, as being the natural Reſult, and the neceſſary Effects of his own Imprudence, and Folly: And therefore he only prays ſilently to God, to diſentangle, and to extricate him out of them, if he ſees it fit and proper; and if it be conſiſtent with the uſual Methods of his Providence. But if he is not conſcious to himſelf of having been, in any Degree, acceſſary to them: Yet even in This Caſe, he does not preſume to murmur and repine at them: But he conſiders them as the wiſe and gracious Diſpenſations of an infinitely Juſt and Good Being, whoſe *Mercies are over all his Works*; and who *does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men* without Reaſon. *But though he cauſe Grief, yet will he have Compaſſion according to the Multitude of his Mercies.* And for this Reaſon he looks carefully into

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Pſa. cxlv. 9. Lam. iii. 32, 33.

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his own Breaſt, and narrowly examines his own Conſcience; to ſee if there be any ſecret Sin lurking there; which may have given Occaſion for this mixed Diſpenſation of Severity and Mercy. *If his Heart condemns him*; then he ſeriouſly repents of his paſt Miſcarriages, and bleſſes the good Providence of God, that does out *of very Faithfulneſs cauſe him to be troubled:* And he does, by God's Grace, amend his Life; That ſo, there being now no longer the ſame Reaſon for the Continuance of his Sufferings, as there was for the Infliction of them at Firſt; but having been duely *exerciſed thereby*, and brought forth *the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs*; he may have the better Grounds of Expectation, to have them removed, in God's due Time. But if, on the other Hand, *his Heart condemns him not, then has he Confidence towards God.* Then he looks upon his Misfortunes as the wiſe and gracious Diſpenſations of a Wiſe and Juſt, and a Merciful and Good Being; who beſt knows what is, upon the Whole, fitteſt and beſt for him. He eſteems them as the *loving Correction* of his Heavenly Father, and as ſo many Marks of God's Favour; as well knowing that *whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth,*

Pſa. cxix. 19.

Heb. xii. 11.

1 John iii. 21.

Heb. xii. 6.

teneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he re- SERM.
ceiveth. Therefore he *deſpiſeth not the Chaſ-* XXI.
tening of the Lord, nor faints when he is re- ver. 5.
buked of him. For he maketh ſore, and bind- Job v. 18.
eth up: He woundeth, and his Hands make whole. With good old *Eli*, he ſays, *It is the* 1 Sam. iii.
Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good. And 18.
with *Job*, *Shall we receive Good at the Hand* Chap. ii.
of God, and ſhall we not receive Evil? And 10.
with our Bleſſed Saviour, *not my Will, but thine be done.* Thus it is the Faithful Chriſtian reſigns himſelf intirely to the Will of God: And being aſſured of his Favour and Protection, he does, like *Job*, *ſeek* only *unto* v. 8.
God, and unto him only does he *commit his Cauſe.* As the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, he *com-* Pſa.
mits his Way unto the Lord, and puts his Truſt xxxvii. 5.
in Him; being fully aſſured, that He will relieve and deliver him in his own appointed Time. And, as the *Captain of his Salvation* Heb. ii.
was made perfect through Sufferings: Even 12.
ſo does he rejoice even in Tribulation; inaſmuch as he is a Partaker of Chriſt's Sufferings. For his *light Affliction which is but* 2 Cor. iv.
for a Moment, worketh for him a far more 17.
exceeding, and Eternal Weight of Glory. In this Manner his greateſt *Sorrow is turned into Joy, and his Joy no Man taketh from him.* John xvi.

For 22.

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For although *he ſoweth in Tears, he ſhall reap in Joy.* Although *he now goeth on his Way weeping*, yet *he beareth forth good Seed*; and therefore he *ſhall doubtleſs come again with Joy, and bring his Sheaves with him.*

Pſa. cxxvi. 6, 7.

And this brings me to the Fourth Benefit and Advantage of the Chriſtian Faith, which is,

4. That it *fills us with all Joy and Peace in Believing.*

Rom. xv. 13.

This is a Sort of Foretaſte of our Future Happineſs, and, as it were, the Earneſt and Pledge of our receiving it. And to ſay the Truth, it is an extraordinary Happineſs, to be at Peace in our own Minds, and in the Favour and Friendſhip, and under the more immediate Protection of the Greateſt and Beſt of Beings. *For the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers. If God be for us, who ſhall be againſt us?* And as St. *Peter* ſays, *Who is he that will harm us, if we be Followers of That which is good?* So long therefore as the Great Lord of Heaven and Earth is *our Shield, and our exceeding great Reward*, there is no Room, no Shadow of Pretence for murmuring and repining, for Diſtruſt and

1 Pet. iii. 12.

12, 13.

Gen. xv. 1.

and Deſpondence, for Impatience and Diſ-SERM. content. XXI.

When the World frowns upon us, and our Friends forſake us; when we fall into Affliction, and when all the outward Appearances of Things bode only Miſery and Sorrow; when the Seaſons prove unfavourable, and when the Means of our Subſiſtence fail us; *Although the Fig-Tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Fields ſhall yield no Meat, the Flock ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls, yet may we rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation.* For he ſhall ſupply all our Wants, in Ways, and Manners unknown to us; and ſhall at a Time, when we leaſt expect it; *fill our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs.* For *whoſo dwelleth under the Defence of the Moſt High; Shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty. He is our Hope, and our ſtrong Hold: Our God in whom* we may ſafely *truſt. He ſhall deliver us from the Snare of the Hunter: And from the noiſome Peſtilence. He ſhall defend us under his Wings, and we ſhall be ſafe under his Feathers: His Faithfulneſs and Truth ſhall be our Shield and Buckler. We ſhall not be afraid for*

Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Acts xiv. 17.

Pſa. xci. 1, &c.

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for any Terror by Night: Nor for the Arrow that flieth by Day; For the Peſtilence that walketh in Darkneſs: Nor for the Sickneſs that deſtroyeth in the Noon Day. A Thouſand ſhall fall beſide us, and Ten Thouſand at our Right Hand: But it ſhall not come nigh us: There ſhall no Evil happen unto us without his Permiſſion: *Neither ſhall any Plague come nigh our Dwelling. For he ſhall give his Angels Charge over us: To keep us in all our Ways.*

And beſide all This, when we do, with an humble and unſhaken Confidence, look forward to That unſpeakable Reward, which awaits our Coming in the Next World; and which the Bleſſed Jeſus himſelf holds out to us for our Encouragement; we ſhall have infinitely more Occaſion for this Religious Rejoicing. For though now we *ſee him not*, yet believing ſtedfaſtly in him, and relying intirely on the Truth and Certainty of his Promiſes, we *rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* Well then might St. *Paul* ſay, That *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace*, and ſo forth. For true Chriſtian Faith will inſpire us with the unfeigned Love of God, and our Neighbour. And whilſt we are upon theſe Terms with both; we ſhall

1 Pet. i. 8.

Gal. v. 22.

ſhall have all the Reaſon in the World to *rejoice ever-more.* So long as we endeavour to *be perfect,* to *be of one Mind,* and *as much as lieth in* us, *to live peaceably with all Men,* we may well *be of good Comfort:* Becauſe, as the Apoſtle obſerves, *The God of Love and Peace ſhall be with us.* And again he ſays, *Our Rejoicing is This, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience.* SERM. XXI. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. i. 12.

And not only This; But, which is,

5. The Fifth Benefit and Advantage of our Faith, it is a Means of obtaining even the Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of This Life.

Godlineſs, or, which is the ſame Thing in a Practical View, Chriſtian Faith, *hath the Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of That which is to come.* It is holy *David*'s Advice, and would to God we did all follow it! *Put thou thy Truſt in the Lord, and be doing Good: Dwell in the Land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed. Delight thou in the Lord: And he will give thee thy Heart's Deſire. Commit thy Way unto the Lord, and put thy Truſt in him: And he ſhall bring it to paſs.* And it ſeems, *David* made it his Obſervation; That he *never ſaw the Righteous forſaken: Nor his Seed begging their Bread.* And again, *No good* 1 Tim. iv. 8. Pſa. xxxvii. 3, 4, 5. ver. 25. lxxxiv. 12.

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good Thing will he with-hold from them that live a godly Life.

Nor was it only under the Law, that Temporal Bleſſings were promiſed to the Faithful: But our Bleſſed Saviour has, in the Goſpel, promiſed the ſame Advantages to Chriſtian Faith. In his Sermon on the Mount, he ſays to his Diſciples, *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened.* And in that Form of Prayer which he gave them, he directs them to pray, Day by Day, for their daily Bread. And for their farther Encouragement to do ſo, he tells them elſewhere, that their Prayers ſhall not return unto them void, when they are offered up with a firm Faith, and unſhaken Aſſurance. *All Things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in Prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive.* And St. *John* ſays, *This is the Confidence that we have in him, that if we aſk any Thing according to his Will he heareth us.* And to the ſame Purpoſe, St. *James*, *Ye have not, becauſe ye aſk not.* And it is obſervable, That Faith was in the Goſpel frequently inſiſted on, as a neceſſary Qualification

Matt. vii. 7, 8.

xxi. 22.

1 John v. 14.

Chap. iv. 2.

ſication, in Order to Thoſe miraculous Cures therein recorded. Thus, *Believe ye that I am able to do this? According to your Faith be it unto you. Thy Faith hath made thee whole. Thy Faith hath ſaved thee.* Thus it is ſaid of the impotent Man at *Lyſtra*, *that St. Paul perceived, that he had Faith to be healed.* SERM. XXI. Matt. ix. 28, 29. Luke viii. 48. xviii. 42. Acts xiv. 9.

But indeed there is Nothing ſtrange in all This. It would rather be ſtrange, if it were otherwiſe. For it is natural to conclude, That God will ſupply his faithful Servants with every Thing that is neceſſary and *convenient for them*; with all Thoſe Things that *pertain unto Life and Godlineſs.* For, as St. *Paul* very juſtly argues, *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all Things.* 2 Pet. i. 3. Rom. viii. 32.

The laſt Advantage ariſing from Chriſtian Faith, which I ſhall take Notice of at this Time, is,

6. That it hath a Fœderal Claim or Title to Juſtification.

But having already ſpoken ſufficiently to this Point, in ſetting forth the Eſſential Properties of our Faith, and ſhewn that the Scripture does Every-Where lay it down as a certain Truth; That we *we are juſtified freely by* iii. 24, 25.

SERM. XXI. *by the Grace of God, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt. Whom God hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood.* And that *the Juſt ſhall live by Faith*: I ſay, as I have done This already, I need not repeat in this Place what has been already ſaid. And therefore I ſhall only *beſeech you,* to *ſuffer* a *Word of Exhortation* before I conclude.

Eph. ii. 8, 9. Heb. x. 38. xiii. 22.

After all, it muſt be confeſſed; That the Frailty of our Nature is ſo great, and the Temptations of the World are in many Caſes ſo very powerful, That we ſhould be in the utmoſt Danger of being overcome by them, were it not for *the Shield of Faith.* But to our unſpeakable Comfort, *Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the World.* Therefore, as the Apoſtle directs, Let us *watch, ſtand faſt in the Faith, quit us like Men, and be ſtrong.* And we have all poſſible Encouragement given us, to uſe our utmoſt Care and Diligence. For *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above That we are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a Way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* Holy *David* ſays, *God forſaketh not his that be godly, but they are preſerved for ever.* Or, as St. *Peter* expreſſes

1 John iv. 4. 1 Cor. xvi. 13. 1 Cor. x. 13. Pſal. xxxvii. 28.

preſſes it, *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of Temptations.* And if we ſeriouſly and earneſtly pray for Grace *to help* us *in* the *Time of Need*; his *Grace will be ſufficient for us, and his Strength made perfect in our Weakneſs.* And although Sin, and the Temptations to Sin, do *abound* in the World: Yet will *Grace much more abound. For God is able to make all Grace abound towards us, that we always having all Sufficiency in all Things, may abound to every good Work.* If therefore we are not wanting unto God, He will never be wanting unto us; but we may boldly and ſafely ſay with the ſame Apoſtle, *I can do all Things through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me.*

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2 Pet. ii. 9. 2 Cor. ix. 8. Phil. iv. 13.

Having then ſuch ſtrong Aſſurances of the Divine Aſſiſtance, ſuch wonderful Encouragement to Diligence and Perſeverance in the Diſcharge of our Duty, and ſuch a great and glorious Reward in View; *Let us give all Diligence to make our Calling and Election ſure; and work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling. For it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good Pleaſure. That ſo an Entrance may be miniſtered unto us abundantly, into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je-*

2 Pet. i. 10. Phil. ii. 12, 13.

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ſus Chriſt. In vain then, my Brethren, will the World allure us; in vain will our own naughty Hearts tempt us to Sin; in vain will *Sinners entice* us; and in vain will the Tempter endeavour to beguile and ſeduce us: *While we look not at the Things which are ſeen; but at the Things which are not ſeen: For the Things which are ſeen, are Temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen, are Eternal.*

2 Cor. iv. 18.

There is no Shadow of Proportion between This tranſitory Life and Eternity. For our *Age is even as Nothing in Reſpect of* It, *and verily every Man living is altogether Vanity.*

Pſa. xxxix. 9.

There is no Compariſon between the fading Pleaſures of Sin, which are but for a Seaſon; (and That an exceeding ſhort one indeed,) and Thoſe unſpeakable Rivers of Pleaſure, which are at God's Right Hand for ever-more. Shall we then baſely forfeit our Heavenly Birth-Right, and for ever ruin our Immortal Souls, for the Sake of ſuch paultry and ſhort-liv'd Gratifications as This vain World affords us? This be far from us! *For the World paſſeth away, and the Luſts thereof: But he that doth the Will of God abideth for ever.* A few Years more, and we ſhall all go into That Land,

1 John ii. 17.

where

all Things are forgotten. Then ſhall all the Noiſe and Hurry of This fluttering, trifling, thoughtleſs, wicked World be entirely at an End. They who were *careful and troubled about* the *Many Things* of This Life; who were ſo buſied in their Secular Projects, and Worldly Purſuits; as never to entertain any ſerious Thoughts of the *One Thing needful*: They who were never enough at Leiſure to *conſider their latter End*; or to think of God and Religion in a proper Manner, ſhall then lie down ſilently in the Duſt: And Nothing ſhall then remain with them, of all that employed their Thoughts and Cares Here in This Life, but the wretched Remembrance of their paſt Folly. Then ſhall they in vain bewail and lament their ungrateful Abuſe of God's Mercy and Goodneſs; and their miſſpending of That precious Time, which was given them to prepare for Heaven and Happineſs. Then ſhall they be for ever delivered up to the intolerable Stings and Laſhes of a wicked Conſcience; and to the Rage and Malice of all the Powers of Darkneſs; which ſhall then be let looſe upon them, and ſuffered to torment them, without Pity, and without End.

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Luke x. 41.

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Since therefore, This is an Affair which calls loudly upon us for the greateſt Degree of Serioufneſs and Attention: Since our Condition in the Next World will be finally and unalterably determined according to our Behaviour Here: And ſince we ſhall be either eternally happy, or everlaſtingly miſerable, as we have lived either well, or ill, in This World: Let us, *While it is* ſtill *called To-Day*, whilſt we have it ſtill in our Power, turn to the Lord with all our Hearts; that ſo He may turn unto us: Let us *Seek the Lord while he may be found* by us: Let us *call upon Him* earneſtly and faithfully, *while He is* ſtill *near unto us all.* And let us be careful to do This, before the Day of Mercy be for ever paſt; and before Thoſe *Things, which belong unto* our *Peace*, be for ever *hid from our Eyes. For the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth alſo and the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what Manner of Perſons ought we to be in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs, looking for and haſting unto the Coming of the Day of God? Wherefore, beloved*

Heb. iii. 13.

Iſai. lv. 6.

Luke xix. 42.

2 Pet. iii. 10.

beloved, ſeeing that ye look for ſuch Things, SERM. *be diligent that ye may be found of Him in* XXI. *Peace, without Spot and blameleſs.* Having therefore This Hope in you, be careful to *purify yourſelves, even as He is pure.* And then may you triumph with the Apoſtle, and ſay with him in the Words of my Text; *This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.*

Now, To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

fore. Having therefore This Hope in you, be careful to

then may you triumph with the Apostle,

and say with him in the Words of my Text;

rom our Faith.

Now, To God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Ghost be ascribed,

ing, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty

and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The Nature of True Repentance.

Luke xiii. 3.

---Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

SERM. XXII.

UPON One of Thoſe Occaſions, when our Bleſſed Saviour taught in Publick; ſome of his Hearers related to him a remarkable Deſtruction, which befel a Company of *Galileans*, as they were offering up Sacrifices unto God.

In the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, we read of one *Judas of Galilee*; who, *in the Days of the Taxing, drew away much People after him*: But as *Gamaliel* ſpeaks, *he alſo periſhed*; *and all, even as many as obeyed him, were diſperſed.* v. 37.

Joſephus, the *Jewiſh* Hiſtorian informs us; * That this Perſon, whom he calls like-

* Ἰούδας δὲ Γαυλανίτης ἀνὴρ, ἐκ πόλεως ὄνομα Γάμαλα, Σαδδουκον Φαρισαῖον προσλαμβανόμενος, ἠπείγετο ἐπὶ ἀποστάσει, τὴν τε ἀποτίμησιν οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ ἄνικρυς δουλείαν ἐπιφέρειν λέγοντες, καὶ τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἐπ' ἀνιλπίστοις παρακαλοῦντες τὸ ἔθνος. *Antiq. Jud.* Lib. 18. Cap. 1. S. 1. Ed. *Hudſoni.*

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wise *Judas Gaulanites*, having associated with himself one *Saddocus* a *Pharisee*, stirred up the People to a Revolt: By representing to them, That this Method of taxing them tended immediately to downright Slavery. And for this Reason they earnestly exhorted the whole Nation in General, to exert themselves vigorously in Defence of their Liberties.

And the same Historian farther tells us;* That this Sect of the *Galileans*, of which *Judas* of *Galilee* was the Author; had such an invincible Passion for Liberty; That they acknowledged God only for their Lord and Governour: And that they looked upon Death in all its Shapes, and the Sufferings of all their Relations and Friends, as Things of no Account; provided only, that they did not own any Man for their Lord, or Master.

It is no Wonder therefore, That Men of such Principles should be often found guilty of treasonable Practices; That they should be frequently detected in plotting of Mischief, and forming Designs against the State.

* —— Δυσκίνητον δὲ τὸ ἐλευθέρῳ ἔρως ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς, μόνον ἡγεμόνα καὶ δεσπότην τὸν Θεὸν ὑπειληφόσι. θανάτων τε ἰδέας ὑπομένειν παραλλαγμένας ἐν ὀλίγῳ τίθεσθαι, καὶ συγγενῶν τιμωρίας καὶ φίλων, ὑπὲρ τοῦ μηδένα ἄνθρωπον προσαγορεύειν δεσπότην. *Idem Ib.* S. 5. *Idem de Bello Jud.* Lib. 2. Cap. 8. Sect. 1.

And

And accordingly we find, That the History of the *Jews* abounds with Inſtances of this Sort. And the Hiſtorian ſays; * That the *Jewiſh* Nation laboured under all Kinds of Evils, without Exception: Even more than it is poſſible to relate, which theſe very Men were the Authors of. And in the ſame Place he aſcribes the final Diſſolution of the *Jewiſh* State to Thoſe Seeds of Rebellion; which were at firſt ſown by theſe Men, and unhappily took too deep a Root in the Minds of the People. SERM. XXII.

Upon the Whole therefore, it is highly probable, as the learned *Grotius* obſerves; † That thoſe *Galileans*, whom *Pilate* ſlew, were ſome of the Followers of this *Judas* of *Galilee*: Who, coming up to *Jeruſalem*, to celebrate the Paſſover; took this Opportunity,

* Κακὸν δὲ ἐκ ἔστιν ὃ μὴ φυέντος ἐκ τῶνδε τῶν ἀνδρῶν, καὶ πεφυτίσθαι τὸ ἔθνος. *Idem in loco ſupra citato.*

† Dubium autem non eſt, quin Judæ Gaulonitæ factio, ſicut ortum in Galilæâ habuerat, ita et multos ibi habuerit, defenſores, qui Hieroſolyma adventantes populum imbuebant opinionibus quæ Imperio Romano adverſabantur: Inter quas et hæc erat, non eſſe ſacra facienda pro Romanis, cujus controverſiæ Joſephus meminit. Omnino ergo credibile eſt, ut et Græcorum Interpretum plerique ſentiunt, hujus Sectæ fuiſſe quos Pilatus ſacris intentos (agno puta Paſchali) in ipſâ rerum novarum molitione oppreſſerit: Sicut poſtea ab Alexandro Procuratore oppreſſi ſunt Judæ illius filii. Hiſtoriam hancce à Joſepho præteritam non magis mirum, quam Infanticidium Bethlehemiticum. *Critici Sacri.* Grotius *in Locum.*

which

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which was ſo favourable for their Purpoſe, of ſpreading their Opinions amongſt the People: And having, as it ſhould ſeem, thereby occaſioned ſome extraordinrry Tumult amongſt them; the News of it ſoon reached *the Governour's Ears.* Now as *Pilate* was bound by his Office to keep a watchful Eye over the Behaviour of the *Jews*; and more eſpecially at the Time of the Feaſt, when *all the Males were obliged to appear before the Lord*; and when an Inſurrection might be of more dangerous Conſequence, than it would at another Time: He might judge it neceſſary to make Examples of the principal Authors of this Diſturbance: In Order to ſtrike a Terror into the Reſt of this Sect; and to prevent the ill Effects of ſuch dangerous Principles, as they held: And, which They took all Opportunities of propagating, with the moſt unwearied Diligence and Zeal.

Deut. xvi. 16. Exod. xxiii. 17. xxxiv. 23.

Upon this Account, and with this View, probably it was; That *Pilate* fell upon the *Galileans*, and ſlew them; whilſt they were buſied in offering up their Sacrifices: And thereby he did, as St. *Luke* ſpeaks, *mingle their Blood with the* Blood of Thoſe *Sacrifices*, which they offered.

xiii. 1.

This

This Conjecture is the more probable; as *Pilate* had, upon other Occaſions, * given Proofs of a rough, arbitrary Diſpoſition: By bringing the Images of *Cæſar* into the City of *Jeruſalem*, in direct Violation, and open Contempt of the Law of *Moſes*: And by ſeizing violently upon the holy Treaſure of the Temple; and applying it to an Uſe of a different Nature, from That it was deſigned for. SERM. XXII.

But however This be, or whatever it was that gave Occaſion for this Slaughter of the *Galileans*: This at leaſt is certain; That ſome Perſons who were acquainted with what had happened, came and told our Saviour of it. And it ſhould ſeem, by the Anſwer which our Lord returned them; as if they thought, that This Death, which the *Galileans* ſuffered; was a ſignal Judgment of God upon them for their Sins.

So ready are Men to make raſh Judgments, and to paſs uncharitable Cenſures upon their Neighbours!

But what ſays our Saviour to Theſe People? Does he countenance this uncharitable cenſorious Diſpoſition? No, By no Means.

* *Joſephi Antiq. Jud.* Lib. 18. Cap. 4. S. 1, 2. *Item De Bello Judaico.* Lib. 2. Cap. 9. S. 2, 3, 4.

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ver. 2, 3.

Suppoſe ye, ſays he, *that Theſe* Galileans *were Sinners above all the* Galileans, *becauſe They ſuffered ſuch Things? I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* As if he had ſaid, You ought not to conclude from what has happened to Theſe *Galileans*; That They were more wicked than the Reſt of their Nation; *becauſe they ſuffered ſuch Things.* For it ſometimes happens in Publick Calamities; that the Innocent ſuffer as well as the Guilty. Therefore your Judgment is raſh and ill-grounded; and proceeds from a very uncharitable Diſpoſition, which ought not to be indulged. And as it is ſo difficult to make a right Judgment of other Perſons and their Characters, from what befals them Here in This Life: Inſtead of judging your Neighbours, you would do well to look at Home; and to take Warning from their Sufferings; not to continue any longer in your Unbelief: But to repent, and to embrace the Goſpel ſpeedily. For, believe me, the Time is not far off; when *Jeruſalem* ſhall be taken, and deſtroyed by the *Roman* Army: And when Thoſe *Jews* that have eſcaped former Deſtructions, ſhall be reduced to the laſt Extremities, and ſhall finally periſh through their own Obſtinacy:

And

And That in as remarkable a Manner, and much more ſo: For it ſhall be at the very Time of the Paſſover; and even in the Midſt of all their Sacrifices, as theſe *Galileans* have periſhed now. *I tell you, Nay: But except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* SERM. XXII.

From the Words of my Text thus explained, I ſhall take Occaſion to ſhew,

I.

The Nature of True Repentance.

II.

The great Virtue and Efficacy of it.

And III.

I ſhall conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

I.

And Firſt, Of the Nature of True Repentance.

True Repentance does, if I miſtake not, contain in the Notion of it Theſe five Things.

1. A deep and unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt.

2. A juſt and awful Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure.

3. A godly Sorrow and Contrition of Heart for having incurred and provoked it.

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4. A thorough Hatred and Deteſtation of our Sins, upon this Account: And,

5. Such a ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolution of Amendment, as does through God's Grace, actually produce and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* Or, in other Words, a thorough Change of Mind and Manners; and a ſincere Obedience for the Time to come.

Matt. iii. 8.

1. And Firſt. True Repentance muſt neceſſarily begin with a deep and unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt. This is the very Foundation, or Ground-Work of the whole Affair; This is the only genuine Source of a true penitential *godly Sorrow*, which *worketh Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of.*

2 Cor. vii. 10.

No Man can rightly amend his Faults, without being firſt of all ſenſible of them: And therefore we do very truely ſay; That Confeſſion is the firſt Step to Amendment.

This deep and unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt, and the natural Conſequence of it, an humble and devout Acknowledgment and Confeſſion of it before God; are ſo eſſentially neceſſary to True Repentance: That the Scriptures lay the whole Streſs of the Matter upon theſe Two Points, as virtually including each other. For he that is deeply,

and

and duely ſenſible of his Guilt; does in Effect condemn himſelf, and confeſs himſelf guilty in the Sight of God: And he that confeſſes his Sins to God, as he ought to do; muſt do it with the fulleſt Conviction, and with the moſt lively and affecting Senſe of the exceeding great Heinouſneſs and Turpitude of them. And for this Reaſon I have choſen to join theſe Two Things together: Becauſe they do mutually imply, and neceſſarily ſuppoſe each other: And becauſe they are in this Manner joined together in the Holy Scriptures. SERM. XXII.

Thus after God had denounced a long Train of Woes againſt the Children of *Iſrael*, in Caſe of their Diſobedience; He ſays thus. *If they ſhall confeſs their Iniquity, and the Iniquity of their Fathers, with their Treſpaſs, which they treſpaſſed againſt me, and that alſo they have walked contrary unto me; And that I alſo have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the Land of their Enemies: If then their uncircumciſed Hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the Puniſhment of their Iniquity: Then will I remember my Covenant with* Jacob, *and alſo my Covenant with* Iſaac, *and alſo my Covenant with* Abraham *will I remember.* Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. v. 5. Numb. v. 6, 7.

Here

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Here we find, That Confeſſion of Sins, a deep and unfeigned Senſe of the Guilt of them, and an humble Acknowledgment of God's Juſtice in the Puniſhment of them; are inſiſted upon as the Conditions, upon which alone the Pardon of them is to be obtained.

2 Sam. xii. 13. Thus again, when *Nathan* rebuked *David* in the Matter of *Uriah*; David *ſaid unto* Nathan, *I have ſinned againſt the Lord.* This humble Confeſſion of his Sin was accompanied with ſuch a deep and unfeigned Senſe of his Guilt; and ſuch a bitter Remorſe, and Compunction of Spirit upon that Account; as rendered his Repentance acceptable unto God. *And* Nathan *ſaid unto* David, *The Lord alſo hath put away thy Sin; thou ſhalt not die.* And for this Reaſon, the Royal Penitent, being now in a Tranſport of Joy, upon his being reſtored to the Divine Favour, ſpeaks thus in That *Song of Deliverance* which he compoſed upon this Occaſion. *I will acknowledge my Sin unto Thee: And mine Unrighteouſneſs have I not hid. I ſaid, I will confeſs my Sins unto the Lord: And ſo thou forgaveſt the Wickedneſs of my Sin.*

Pſa. xxxii. 5, 6.

And

And to the ſame Purpoſe his Son *Solomon* ſays thus; *He that covereth his Sins, ſhall not proſper: But whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall have Mercy.* SERM. XXII. Prov. xxviii. 13.

And St. *John* to the like Effect; *If we confeſs our Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanſe us from all Unrighteouſneſs.* 1 John i. 9.

From all which Paſſages it appears, That we muſt beget in our Minds, and imprint upon our Hearts, the deepeſt and moſt unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt; before we can repent to any Purpoſe. The proud *Phariſee* in the Goſpel; who was full of himſelf, and his own Righteouſneſs; could not poſſibly become better: So long as he entertained ſuch an overweening Opinion, and high Conceit of himſelf. Whilſt he ſaw no Faults in himſelf; he could not perceive any Neceſſity of Amendment: But ſo long as he continued to ſeem righteous in his own Eyes; he muſt neceſſarily continue both to judge, and to act amiſs. And for this Reaſon he was rejected of God: Whilſt the poor Publican, who entertained a due Senſe of his own Vileneſs, and humbled himſelf for it, in the Sight of God; was graciouſly accepted by him.

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Therefore we muſt endeavour to poſſeſs ourſelves with a deep, and affecting Senſe of the exceeding great Depravity and Odiouſneſs of Sin; the exceſſive Obliquity and Baſeneſs of its Nature; and the infinite Riſque and Danger which attends it: And theſe Conſiderations muſt ſink deep into our Hearts; and work in us the moſt ſerious and ſettled Conviction, and Perſuaſion of its deadly and deſtructive Tendency.

And to this End, we muſt conſider it, as the wilful Violation of the moſt perfect Rule: As the voluntary Tranſgreſſion of the Great Law of our Nature: As a preſumptuous Contradiction, and daring Oppoſition, to the Eternal and Immutable Rules of the Divine Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and Goodneſs: As a manifeſt Contempt of the Divine Authority, and of the Revealed Will of God: As a bold Indignity, and open Defiance, to the Supreme Judge, and Moral Governor of the World: As the moſt outragious Inſult to the moſt Powerful and Beneficent, to the moſt Juſt and Holy; to the Greateſt, and Kindeſt, and Beſt of Beings: As the baſeſt Return for all his wonderful Kindneſs, and Goodneſs, and Love to us: As the moſt ſhocking Abuſe of his aſtoniſhing Forbear-

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ance and Long-Suffering towards us: And above all, as the vileſt, and moſt ſhameful Ingratitude to our Heavenly Father, for his ineſtimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. SERM. XXII.

This is the True Light, in which we ought to conſider our Sins. And therefore we ſhould not only reflect within ourſelves; how unlike to God our Sins make us; how unworthy of his Favour; how odious and abominable they render us in his Sight; and how juſtly obnoxious to his Eternal Wrath and Vengeance: But we ſhould likewiſe conſider, That every Sin, which we willingly and wilfully commit, does in Reality, *crucify the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open Shame*; That we do thereby profanely *tread under Foot the Son of God, and count the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are ſanctified, an unholy Thing, and do Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace*; by *defiling* and polluting his Holy *Temple*; and thereby *grieving* and forcing him to flee from us. Heb. vi. 6. x. 29.

And ſurely, when we look upon our Sins in This View: We cannot help being deeply ſenſible of the Greatneſs of our Guilt; and abundantly convinced of the exceeding great Malignity and Odiouſneſs of Sin.

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The very Birds of the Air, the Beaſts of the Field, and the Fiſhes of the Sea, do all of them carefully obſerve the Laws of their Nature: And do, by a regular, and uniform Courſe of Exiſtence, all of them jointly conſpire, to ſhew forth, and proclaim their Maker's Praiſe. And, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God: And the Firmament ſheweth his handy Work.*

Pſa. xix. 1.

Therefore, whilſt the Whole Creation does thus, as it were, join in Concert; and by its ſilent Harmony, and Order, evidently ſet forth the Praiſes of God: How exceedingly wicked, and criminal, muſt Man be; thus to rebel againſt his Almighty and Beneficent Creator, and againſt his Merciful Saviour and Redeemer: Who does, notwithſtanding all his Ingratitude, not only uphold and ſupport him with his Hand, Here in This World: But likewiſe interceed, and plead for him with his Father; and ſollicit and court him, wicked as he is, to return to his Duty and Allegiance, by the affectionate Calls, and gracious Applications of the Holy Spirit?

If we do but look upon our Sins in This Light, and ſuffer ſuch Reflections as Theſe to dwell long enough upon our Minds: They cannot

cannot fail of exciting in us a deep and unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt. And, as St. *Cyprian* obſerves, * The greateſt Happineſs of all is, not to ſin, or offend wilfully: And the next to This is, to be duely ſenſible of our Sins. SERM. XXII.

And the Reaſon of this Aſſertion is, That if this Senſe of our Guilt is but duely attended to: It will not only effectually reſtrain us from returning to our former Sins: But will likewiſe powerfully incline us to lead a new Life for the Time to come: And then more eſpecially; when we add to it the Second Thing included in the Notion of True Repentance, which is,

2. A juſt and awful Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure.

As the Foundation of Repentance muſt neceſſarily be laid in a deep, and unfeigned Senſe of the Guilt of our paſt Sins: Even ſo muſt the Foundation of our future Obedience be neceſſarily placed in the Fear of God; and in a juſt and awful Apprehenſion, and Dread of his Diſpleaſure. And accordingly we find, That the Obedience of our Firſt-

* Primus felicitatis gradus eſt, non delinquere: Secundus, delicta cognoſcere. *Sancti Cæc. Cypriani Epiſt.* 59. Ed. *Oxon.*

Parents was not only founded in the Conſideration of God's Goodneſs to them; but likewiſe upon the Apprehenſion and Dread of his Diſpleaſure, in Caſe of their Diſobedience. And agreeably hereunto, the Fear of God is Every-Where, both in the Old, and the New Teſtament propoſed to Men, as one of the Principal Motives to Obedience: And the Vices and Impieties of Men, are as conſtantly aſcribed to the Abſence and the Want of this Religious Fear and Dread.

Thus *Abraham* ſays of the Inhabitants of
Gen xx. 11. *Gerar, Surely the Fear of God is not in this Place; and they will ſlay me for my Wife's Sake.* And God himſelf ſaid to *Abraham,*
xxii. 12. when he offered up his Son; *Now I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not with-held thy Son, thine only Son from me.*
xxxi. 53. Thus *Jacob* is ſaid to *ſwear by the Fear of*
xlii. 18. *his Father* Iſaac. And *Joſeph* ſays, *This do, and live: For I fear God.* And *Moſes* ſays to the Children of *Iſrael,* upon the giving of the Law in Mount *Sinai,* with the awful Solemnity of an Earthquake, and of Thun-
Exod. xx. 20. der, and Lightening; *God is come to prove you, and that his Fear may be before your Faces, that ye ſin not.* And elſewhere God
Deut. v. 29. himſelf ſays, *O that there were ſuch an Heart*

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in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always. SERM. XXII.

Well therefore does Holy *David* say; *The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wiſdom.* And to the ſame Purpoſe, *Solomon, The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Knowledge.* And Holy *Job* thus, *The Fear of the Lord, That is Wiſdom.* And the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſays to the *Jews, Sanctify the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread.* And ſo in innumerable other Paſſages both of the Law and the Prophets.

Pſa. cxi. 10. Prov. i. 7. 9. 10. xxviii. 28. viii. 13.

And in the New Teſtament our Bleſſed Saviour directs his Diſciples, to *fear him which is able to deſtroy both Soul and Body in Hell.* And in the like Manner his Apoſtles direct their Converts to *fear God*; to *perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God*; and to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and to *ſerve God acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear*; and to *paſs the Time of their ſojourning here in Fear*; and ſo forth.

Matt. x. 28. 1 Pet. ii. 17. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Phil. ii. 12. Heb. xii. 28. 1 Pet. i. 17.

And from the Whole it is eaſy to obſerve, That as the Fear of God is ſo eſſentially neceſſary; To enforce and ſecure our Obedience to his Laws: It follows from hence; That a juſt and awful Apprehenſion, and Dread of God's Diſpleaſure, muſt likewiſe

SERM. XXII. neceſſarily be One of the Principal Ingredients in a Sincere and True Repentance.

And for this Reaſon *Tertullian* doth very rightly ſay, * That where there is no Fear of God; there cannot, for that Reaſon, be any Amendment: And where there is no Amendment, all Repentance is neceſſarily vain, and to no Purpoſe.

But where Men are duely ſenſible of their Guilt; and thoroughly convinced and perſuaded of the exceeding great Malignity and Odiouſneſs of Sin: They will be naturally led to entertain a juſt and awful Apprehenſion, and Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure, upon this Account.

When the poor guilty Sinner looks carefully into his own Breaſt; and reads over the black Catalogue of his Sins; and ſeriouſly conſiders all the heightening Circumſtances, and Aggravations of them: When he conſiders the Infinite Dignity and Majeſty

* Ubi metus nullus, emendatio proinde nulla: Ubi emendatio nulla, Pœnitentia neceſſariò vana. *Tertullianus de Pœnitentia.* Ed. *Rigaltii.*

And again, he ſays to the ſame Effect.

Quem cenſeas digniorem, niſi emendatiorem? Quem emendatiorem, niſi timidiorem, et idcirco verâ pœnitentiâ functum? Timuit enim adhuc delinquere, ne non mereretur accipere. At ille Præſumptor, cum ſibi repromitteret, ſecurus ſcilicet timere non potuit: Sic ne pœnitentiam implevit, quia *Inſtrumento pœnitentiæ*, i. e. M E T U caruit. *Idem Ibidem.*

Of

of That God, whom he has offended, affronted, and inſulted: When he reflects upon That tranſcendent Purity and Holineſs, which he has ſhocked, grieved, and diſpleaſed: When he thinks upon That inflexible and tremendous Juſtice, which he has incenſed and provoked: And when he takes into his Account, That amazing and ſtupendous Mercy and Goodneſs, which he has ſo long, and ſo ſhamefully deſpiſed and abuſed: He muſt needs be ſeized with the utmoſt Horror and Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure, and Indignation; which he has brought upon himſelf: And his *Heart* muſt even *melt* within him, and his *Spirit faint*, and his *Knees ſmite together*, like the impious *Belſhazzar*, when he ſaw the Hand-Writing upon the Wall againſt him. SERM. XXII.

When he conſiders; That he has forfeited, and loſt the Favour and Friendſhip of the Greateſt and Beſt of Beings; That he has by his Sins *crucified afreſh* the Lord of Glory, and made even his Saviour and Redeemer to become his Enemy; and That he has *grieved* and vexed the Holy Spirit of God, and forced Him to depart from him: He muſt needs be filled with Remorſe and Anguiſh: And when he conſiders farther,

That

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That dreadful Penalty, which he has incurred by his Sins: When he looks forward into the Next World, with Horror and Dread: When he ſees, over his Head, an offended and angry God; almoſt ready to pronounce Sentence, and to execute Vengeance upon him; and below, Hell gaping to receive him, and *moving* herſelf *at* his *Coming*: Whilſt he is thus diſtreſſed, and perplexed; and walks over the frightful Precipice of Eternity, trembling every Step he goes; and fearing every Minute, leſt he ſhould fall into This bottomleſs Pit of Deſtruction and Perdition: Whilſt *the Terrors of God do* thus *ſet themſelves in Array againſt him*; He muſt needs be overwhelmed, and confounded with the Conſciouſneſs of his Guilt; and be thoroughly poſſeſſed with an Apprehenſion and Dread of God's Diſpleaſure: Which if not timely averted, and turned away; muſt ſoon plunge him into Eternal Miſery and Torment.

Job vi. 4.

This, it muſt be owned, is a terrible Caſe: But ſtill where there is This Senſe and Feeling left; there are notwithſtanding ſome Hopes. This is at leaſt a favourable Symptom; and a ſure Sign and Indication, That the Part affected is not as yet quite mortified:

fied: But, That it may ſtill, provided only that due Care be taken, and no Time loſt; be by Degrees reſtored to its former Strength and Soundneſs. SERM. XXII.

For although the Denunciations of God's Wrath, againſt obdurate and impenitent Sinners, be indeed exceedingly ſevere and terrible: Yet there is, Thanks be to God for his wonderful Love and Mercy to us in Chriſt, This Comfort and Conſolation left: That the Goſpel affords all poſſible Encouragement to ſincere Penitents, to come unto God, by Faith in Chriſt; who has graciouſly invited all ſuch as are weary, *and heavy laden* with the Burden of their Sins, to come unto him by Faith and Repentance; and *He will give them Reſt* unto their Souls. Matt. xi. 28.

If therefore, to the Senſe of his Guilt, and to an awful Apprehenſion and Dread of God's Diſpleaſure; the humble Penitent does but add, in the Third Place,

3. A godly Sorrow and Contrition of Heart, for having incurred and provoked it; he does, at leaſt ſo far, repent ſincerely, and as he ought to do.

And indeed when he is once duely convinced of the exceeding great Malignity, and Heinouſneſs of Sin; and is, in Conſequence

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quence hereof, filled with a juſt and awful Apprehenſion and Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure, upon this Account: He muſt needs be pierced with the moſt lively Sorrow; and feel the bittereſt Remorſe, and Anguiſh of Soul, for his paſt Sins. When he conſiders, how grievouſly he has provoked the Majeſty of Heaven; what ungrateful Returns he has made to God, for all his wonderful Love and Goodneſs towards him; how he has *crucified* the Bleſſed Jeſus afreſh by his Sins; and *grieved the Holy Spirit of God*: When he conſiders That terrible Condition into which his Sins have brought him, and That dreadful Puniſhment which hangs over his Head: I ſay, when he conſiders all This ſeriouſly; he will, with the Pſalmiſt, not only *confeſs his Wickedneſs*, but he will likewiſe be truely *ſorry for his Sin*. And according as his Sins have been either more, or leſs in Number; or more, or leſs grievous in their Nature; or elſe continued in either a longer, or a ſhorter Time: Even ſo will his Sorrow, and Grief for them, be either greater, or leſs, in Proportion.

Pſa. xxxviii. 18.

Thus we find, that St. *Peter*, who had denied his Maſter, and that with the dreadful Aggravation of profane Curſing and Swearing,

Swearing, *went out, and wept bitterly.* The Apoſtle was ſenſible, That ſo great a Crime as his was, called for Floods of Tears to waſh away the Guilt of it. And therefore he *went out* to ſeek a proper Place; where he might indulge his Grief, and give full Vent to his Sorrow. His Concern for his Sin was too great to be confined; too much to be expreſſed by a Sigh, or a Groan, or a ſorrowful Countenance: And therefore he ſought a Place, where he might pour forth his Soul freely unto God, *and ſhew him of his Trouble*; and where he might, by *ſtrong Crying and Tears*, earneſtly implore the Pardon of his Sins, and humbly deprecate the Wrath of God; and devoutly ſue, to be reſtored to Favour.

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Matt. xxvi. 75.

Pſa. cxlii. 2.

If therefore we would repent, as we ought to do; our Sorrow, and our Grief muſt keep Pace with our Guilt: And the former muſt be as great, and as laſting; as the latter is heinous, and provoking. If our Sins have been great and manifold; our Sorrow for them muſt be great in Proportion, and laſting in Duration. For great and heinous Offences, confirmed Habits of Sin, and a long Courſe of Impiety and Irreligion, do neceſſarily require a deep and ſin-

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cere Humiliation of the Soul before God; and a long, and laſting Sorrow for them: And although we pray, and hope, and believe, and are aſſured; That God will freely and graciouſly pardon all our Sins, for the Sake of Chriſt, upon our ſincere Repentance and Amendment: Yet we muſt take eſpecial Care, that we do not too eaſily forgive ourſelves. And although our Heavenly Father is merciful, and gracious; and always ready, and willing, to forgive Thoſe that truely repent: Yet we muſt be ſure to abaſe and

1 Pet. v. 6. *humble ourſelves under the mighty Hand of God*, and to take Shame unto ourſelves;

Dan. ix. 7. ſaying in the Words of the Prophet, *O Lord, Righteouſneſs belongeth unto Thee, but unto us Confuſion of Faces.*

2 Cor. vii. 9. And if we would *ſorrow after a godly Manner*, our Sorrow muſt not proceed only from a Senſe of the Danger we are in, but from a ſincere Love of God, and a Senſe of his wonderful Goodneſs and Love to us.

There is indeed a Sorrow, which proceeds only from an Apprehenſion of the imminent Danger, to which our Sins have unhappily expoſed us. But alas! This is no more than

James iv. 14. a ſmall *Vapour, that appeareth for a little Time, and then vaniſheth away.* A Man, that

that lives under the Influence of vicious Habits; may, it is poſſible, at the ſeeming Approach of Death; or, when *the Hand of God is heavy upon him*, appear to be truely penitent for his Sins: He may expreſs a great Concern for his paſt Behaviour; and promiſe ſolemnly to live better, and to become quite a New Man; if he can but eſcape This Sickneſs, or This Calamity: But, at beſt, This is no more than the Natural Workings of Self-Preſervation. It is natural for all Men to deſire Happineſs; although they are often miſtaken in the Uſe of the Means, which are neceſſary in Order to procure it: And it is likewiſe equally natural, to ſhun and fly from every Thing which has the Air and Appearance of Miſery. Therefore, when Men ſtart, and ſhrink back, at the ſeeming Approach of Death; and ſhew an Abhorrence for Thoſe Courſes which have brought them almoſt to the very Brink of Deſtruction: They only do what Nature itſelf prompts them to, and what they cannot poſſibly avoid. For who is That Man, who would not run out of an Houſe, that was all on Fire about his Ears, or juſt ready to fall on his Head? Therefore it is very greatly to be feared, that if the Danger were but

SERM. XXII.

Job. xxxiii. 7.

once

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once removed, ſuch Perſons would, ſoon after That, harden their Hearts, as *Pharaoh* formerly did; and return to their old Sins, like *The Dog to his Vomit*, and like *The Sow that was waſhed to her Wallowing in the Mire.*

2 Pet. ii. 22.

Nothing is more common than to ſee Men, upon the Bed of Sickneſs, greatly bewailing and lamenting the Folly and Wickedneſs of their paſt Lives; and full of Reſolutions to lead a New Life, if they can but get over this Sickneſs; and if God will but be pleaſed, to reſtore them again to their former Health. If God would but graciouſly do This, how thankful, and how good would they be? But how much ſoever in Earneſt they may ſeem for the Time; 'tis ſorely againſt the Grain, and only becauſe they cannot help it. For as ſoon as ever the Danger is paſt, they do, like the frightened Mariner, when the Tempeſt is over; ſoon forget all their good Reſolutions, and ſolemn Vows: And inſtead of being the better for them; they do on the contrary become more hardened, and rather *ſtrengthen themſelves* in their Wickedneſs: Not conſidering, and *not knowing that the Goodneſs of God* ought rather

Rom. ii. 4.

rather to *lead them to Repentance*, than to encourage them to continue in their Sins. SERM. XXII.

This Sorrow therefore, as it is naturally of ſuch a ſhort Continuance, cannot poſſibly produce any good Effects: And, for this Reaſon, cannot poſſibly be acceptable in the Sight of God. This is that *Sorrow of the World*; which, as the Apoſtle ſays, *worketh Death*. But a true *Godly Sorrow*, which *worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of*; muſt proceed from a deep and unfeigned Senſe of our Guilt, and a juſt and awful Apprehenſion, and Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure. It muſt not only ariſe from a Senſe of our Danger: But it muſt likewiſe have a Reſpect unto God; to the Honour and Authority of his Laws; and to the Paſſion and Death of our Bleſſed Saviour, which our Sins were partly the Cauſe of: And alſo to the Glory of his Name, and the Intereſts of his Religion, which have been ſo groſsly injured, and hurted by our Sins. And therefore it muſt be ſuch a Sorrow as *rents our Hearts*, and tears them away from their beloved Sins; ſuch a godly Sorrow and Contrition of Heart, as begets in us, 2 Cor. vii. 10.

4. A thorough Hatred and Deteſtation of our Sins; which is the next Thing naturally

SERM. XXII. included in the proper Notion of True Repentance.

* Then only can we be truely ſaid to repent; when our Sins become as odious, and diſpleaſing to us; as they were once agreeable, and pleaſing: When our Opinions, and Sentiments of them, are perfectly different from what they were before: When we hate and abhor Thoſe Practices, which once we looked upon with Complacency and Satisfaction: And when the Remembrance of them ſerves only to work us up to a holy Indignation, and diſpleaſure againſt them; and againſt ourſelves, for having once been guilty of them.

This is That godly Sorrow, and pious Reſentment for our paſt Sins; which St. ver. 11. *Paul* deſcribes in theſe Words. *For behold, this ſelf-ſame Thing, that ye ſorrowed after a godly Sort, what Careſulneſs it wrought in you, yea, what Clearing of yourſelves, yea, what Indignation, yea, what Fear, yea, what vehement Deſire, yea, what Zeal, yea, what Revenge?*

* Pœnitere tum dicere ſolemus quum, quæ ipſi fecimus, aut quæ de noſtrâ voluntate noſtroque conſilio facta ſunt, ea nobis poſt incipiunt diſplicere; ſententiamque in iis noſtram demutamus. *A. Gellii Noct. Att.* Lib. 17. Cap. 1.

It

If we are but truely and deeply ſenſible of the great Malignity and Heinouſneſs of our paſt Sins; and juſtly apprehenſive of God's Diſpleaſure, for them; and if we are likewiſe heartily ſorry, for having offended him: We cannot chuſe but have an Abhorrence, and Averſion for Thoſe Sins; which have ſeparated between us and our God; which have ſet us at ſuch a Diſtance from our Heavenly Father; and made us incur his Diſpleaſure, and Indignation. If we have a true Regard for God, and Religion; we muſt naturally hate all ſuch Practices as are diſpleaſing to Him, and injurious to his Honour and Glory. And if we would be thoroughly reconciled to him, and fully re-inſtated in his Favour: We muſt love every Thing that God loves, and hate every Thing that God hates: And conſequently, we muſt hate and abhor our Sins from our very Hearts: Becauſe, without This, God cannot be reconciled unto us; neither can we poſſibly be qualified for his Favour. SERM. XXII.

For unleſs we do from our Hearts deteſt and abhor them, we cannot poſſibly leave, and forſake them. No Man ever yet willingly left and forſook That, which he continued to love, and to doat upon. So long

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as we retain any Degree of Liking for them; we ſhall be too much inclined to return unto them. So that you ſee, before we can poſſibly forſake our Sins, and amend our Lives, we muſt ſincerely hate and abhor them.

And ſurely, when we reflect duely upon the exceſſive Turpitude and Odiouſneſs of Sin; and the dreadful Conſequences, to which it expoſes us; and what a terrible, and *fearful Thing it is, to fall into the Hands of the living God*: It is impoſſible, but we muſt ſincerely deteſt and abhor Thoſe Sins, which have rendered us obnoxious to his Diſpleaſure, and to all the ſevere Effects of his *wrathful Indignation*. Therefore, if we do but ſeriouſly conſider the Fatal Tendency of Sin, and the deadly and deſtructive Nature of it; we muſt needs conceive the moſt unfeigned Averſion, and Abhorrence, for all ſuch Ways, as lead down to Death and Damnation. And, for this Reaſon, we ſhall be naturally inclined to compleat, and perfect our Repentance,

Heb. x. 31.

5. By forming ſuch a ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolution of Amendment, as will, through God's Grace, ſeconding our earneſt and faithful Endeavours; actually produce, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*.

This

This Reſolution is the neceſſary Reſult of the foregoing Branches of True Repentance. For, whoever is duely ſenſible of his Guilt, juſtly apprehenſive of God's Diſpleaſure, and heartily ſorry for having incurred and provoked it; and does, in Conſequence hereof, hate and abhor his paſt Sins, upon this Account; muſt neceſſarily form ſuch a ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolution of Amendment; as will probably, through God's Grace upon his Endeavours, actually *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* SERM. XXII.

No Man, that thinks at all, can poſſibly be reconciled to the dreadful Thought, of his being finally and eternally miſerable. And for this Reaſon, every Sinner that ſeriouſly bethinks himſelf of the Fatal Tendency of his ſinful Ways: If he proceeds only ſo far, as we have hitherto gone, in the Conſideration of this Subject: And if he paſſes regularly and carefully through all the ſeveral Stages before-mentioned: He muſt neceſſarily, in the laſt Place, firmly and ſtedfaſtly reſolve upon a new Courſe of Life, for the Time to come. He can never think of going on in the ſame Way, as he did before: Contrary to the impartial Judgment of his own Mind; the cleareſt and moſt forcible Con-

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viction of his Underſtanding; the ſtrong and powerful Remonſtrances of his Conſcience; the expreſs Commands of God in Scripture; and the awful and intereſting Motives of the Goſpel: And This, at the Expence of all his Eaſe and Quiet Here in This World; and with the Infinite Riſque and Hazard of his Eternal Salvation in the Next. But, on the contrary, whilſt his poor, wounded Soul, is thus brimful of the Senſe of his Guilt; with the Apprehenſion and Dread of God's Diſpleaſure; and even overflows with Tears, and other Expreſſions of Sorrow, upon both Theſe Accounts; and does moſt ſincerely hate and deteſt its former Sins: He muſt neceſſarily form a ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolution of Amendment, for the Time to come. He will naturally ſay, with the Prodigal in the Goſpel, *I will ariſe, and go to my Father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.* And he will likewiſe firmly reſolve to be dutiful and obedient for the Time to come.

Luke xv. 18, 19.

This is what every ſincere Penitent does, and muſt do, if he hopes that his Repentance will be accepted of God. Therefore, a faint

Reſolution

Reſolution of Amendment will by no Means ſerve our Turn: But we muſt reſolve in good Earneſt, to break off our Sins, and never more to return unto them again: And we muſt be ſure to put our Reſolutions into Practice, and to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; That ſo our Repentance may never need *to be repented of.* SERM. XXII. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

Unleſs we do This; 'Tis all loſt Labour: All the Reſt will go for Nothing; and be of no Account in the Sight of God. For, as the wiſe Son of *Sirach* ſays, *He that waſheth himſelf after the Touching of a dead Body, if he touch it again, what availeth his Waſhing? So is it with a Man that faſteth for his Sins, and goeth again, and doth the ſame: Who will hear his Prayer? Or what doth his humbling profit him?* Ecclus. xxxiv. 25, 26.

For which Reaſon, our Reſolution of Amendment muſt be ſincere and ſtedfaſt: It muſt be ſuch as will ſtand the Shock of a violent Temptation: Such as may, by the Help of God's Grace, be able to withſtand the furious Aſſaults of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. We muſt before-hand expect to have the Sincerity of our Reſolution brought to the Teſt. Well, therefore, did the Son of *Sirach* adviſe, *My Son, if thou* ii. 1.

SERM. XXII. *come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation.* We ought then to prepare ourselves accordingly, and to *put on the whole Armour of God*; That so we *may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil; and having done all to stand.* And that our Endeavours may prove effectual, we must pray to God to assist and to strengthen us: That so his *Grace* may be *sufficient for us*, and his *Strength made perfect in our Weakness*. And when we are actually under Circumstances of Temptation; we must look up stedfastly unto Heaven, with the Eye of Faith; we must call to Mind all the Promises and Threatenings of the Gospel; all the Glories, and the Joys of Heaven; and all the Miseries, and the Torments of Hell. And for our farther Encouragement to persevere in our Duty, let us set before us the glorious Examples of Those Noble Worthies, who have gone before us in the same Paths of Virtue and Goodness: Of Those many Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors; who have, before us, *fought* the same *good Fight*, who have *finished their Course, and kept the Faith*; and who are now entered upon the Reward of their faithful Services Here in This World.

Eph. vi. 11.

ver. 13.

2 Cor. xii. 9.

2 Tim. iv. 7.

If

If we are, in this Manner, enabled to re- SERM. XXIII.
ſiſt and overcome Temptations; and to conquer, and ſubdue our Sins: And if we do, by a regular and uniform Courſe of Obedience to all God's Laws, without Exception, or Reſerve; manifeſt the Sincerity and Firmneſs of our Reſolution: If we do, upon all Occaſions, *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*; and ſhew forth the Praiſes of God, in our Lives, and Converſations: Then is our Repentance ſincere, and acceptable in the Sight of God; for the Sake, and through the Merits, and Mediation, of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

And This brings me in the Second Place,

II.

To ſhew the great Power and Efficacy of True Repentance.

But having already treſpaſſed too long upon your Patience, This muſt be left to the next Opportunity.

Now, To God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed, as is due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

If we are, in this Manner, enabled to re-
ſiſt and overcome Temptations; and to con-
quer, and ſubdue our Lusts: And if we do
by a regular and uniform Courſe of Obedi-
ence to all God's Laws, without Exception,
or Reſerve; manifeſt the Sincerity and Plain-
neſs of our Reſolutions: If we do, upon all
Occaſions, diſplay the Power of Religion,
in our Lives, and Converſations: That is
our Reaſonable Service, and acceptable in
the Sight of God, for Chriſt's ſake.

And This being the ſecond Thing,

To ſhew the great Power and Efficacy of
True Repentance.

But having already treſpaſſed too long up-
on your Patience, This muſt be left to the
next Opportunity.

Now, To God, the Father; God, the
Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed,
as is due, all Honour, Glory, Might, Ma-
jeſty, and Dominion, now and ever more.
Amen.

The Power and Efficacy of True Repentance.

LUKE xiii. 3.

---Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe on Theſe Words, I propoſed, SERM. XXIII

I.

To ſhew the Nature of True Repentance.

II.

The great Power and Efficacy of it.

And III.

To conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

The Firſt of Theſe Heads I have already ſpoken to.

And I come now II.

To ſhew the great Power and Efficacy of True Repentance.

When I ſpeak of the Power and Efficacy of True Repentance, I do not mean, That it has in itſelf any Degree of Cauſality or Efficiency

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ciency in the Affair of our Juſtification with God. True Repentance, which always includes Amendment of Life, may in ſome Sort ſerve to indemnify our future Conduct: But it can in no Ways and by no Means attone for, and expiate the Guilt of our paſt Sins. And therefore, as we have it not in our Power to make Satisfaction to the Divine Juſtice, for the Corruption of our Nature, and the Sins of our Lives; and as we are, by Reaſon of the great Frailty and Infirmity of our preſent State, utterly incapable of a perfect and unſinning Obedience: Therefore, I ſay, God has in great Mercy and Love, and in great Pity and Compaſſion to our preſent Weakneſs; graciouſly condeſcended to provide this Satisfaction himſelf: And to admit us into a Second Covenant, upon ſuch Terms as are ſuited to the preſent Condition of our Nature, and That Degree of Strength which we now enjoy. Thus it is that we are *juſtified freely by God's Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt: Whom God hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood.*

Rom. iii. 24, 25.

Theſe Terms are, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Or elſe, ſuch a Faith

Acts xx. 21.

Faith in the Merits of Christ, and such a Belief of the Doctrines which he delivered, as does, by the Operation of God's Spirit upon our Hearts, actually produce in us sincere Repentance for our past Sins, and unfeigned Obedience for the Time to come. Serm. XXIII.

There is now, under the Gospel, an inseparable Connexion established between Faith, and Repentance, on the one Hand; and the Remission of Sins, and Eternal Life, on the other. And although Repentance be frequently spoken of by itself, as a Thing that will entitle us to Pardon and Salvation, yet it must always be understood to be such a Repentance, as is founded upon Gospel Motives, and actually proceeds from Faith in Christ; which is the only Thing that can make it acceptable in the Sight of God.

Thus *John* the Baptist preached Repentance, because *the Kingdom of Heaven was at Hand.* The Belief of the near Approach of This Kingdom was the great Motive upon which their Repentance was grounded: And they who believed it to be actually at Hand, *were*, in Testimony of their Belief, *baptised of him in* Jordan, *confessing their Sins.* From whence it appears, That it was their Faith, which gave a Sort of Merit to their Matt. iii. 2. ver. 6.

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their Repentance, and rendered it available *for the Remiſſion of Sins*; as St. *Luke* ſpeaks. And for this Reaſon, St. *Paul* ſays, John *verily baptiſed with the Baptiſm of Repentance, ſaying unto the People, That they ſhould believe on him which ſhould come after him, that is, on Chriſt Jeſus.*

Luke iii. 3.

Acts xix. 4.

And to the ſame Purpoſe our Bleſſed Saviour in theſe Words, *Now after that* John *was put into Priſon, Jeſus came into* Galilee, *preaching the Goſpel of the Kingdom of God, And ſaying, the Time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at Hand: Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.*

Mark i. 14, 15.

And, as our Bleſſed Lord joined Faith and Repentance together in this Manner: Even ſo likewiſe has he joined together, and that inſeparably, Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins in his Name, in That Commiſſion which he gave to his Apoſtles, after his Reſurrection, in theſe Words, *And he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the Dead the Third Day: And that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name, among all Nations.*

Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

And agreeably hereunto, when St. *Peter* opened This Commiſſion on the Day of Pentecoſt;

tecoſt; and preached unto the *Jews*, *That* SERM. *ſame Jeſus*, whom *they had taken, and by* XXI. *wicked Hands had crucified, and ſlain*: The Acts ii. Hiſtorian tells us, that *when they heard This*, 23. *they were pricked in their Heart, and ſaid unto* Peter, *and to the Reſt of the Apoſtles, Men, and Brethren, what ſhall we do?* Their Conſciences, now awakened and alarmed, ſeverely upbraided them with the horrid Guilt they had contracted, by wilfully *crucifying the Lord of Glory*; and the Senſe of their Guilt was ſo very tormenting and inſupportable, that it almoſt drove them to Deſpair and Madneſs. And ſurely, if ever there was Need of a healing Balm, to be poured into the deadly Wounds of a guilty Conſcience; Theſe Men, of all others that ever lived, or ever ſhall live, ſtood moſt in Need of ſuch a Sovereign Remedy. And yet, dangerous and deſperate as their Condition was; and ſeemingly without Hope, as they themſelves thought it; when, in a Fit of wild Deſpair, they uttered Theſe melancholy Words; *What ſhall we do?* Yet their Caſe was not utterly paſt Cure. For the *Things* that are *impoſſible with Men*, Mark x. *are poſſible with God.* As *Daniel* ſays, *To* 27. *the Lord our God belong Mercies and For-* ix. 9. *giveneſſes*,

ver. 37.

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giveneſſes, though we have rebelled againſt him. He is *a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, ſlow to Anger, and of great Kindneſs.* God himſelf graciouſly declared unto *Moſes* his great Readineſs to pardon and forgive Sins upon Repentance: When he *paſſed by before him and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in Goodneſs and Truth, keeping Mercy for Thouſands, forgiving Iniquity and Tranſgreſſion and Sin.*

Nehem. ix. 17.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

And for This Reaſon, although the Sin of Thoſe Wretches, who crucified our Saviour, was exceeding great; great indeed beyond Expreſſion: Yet it was not too great for God to forgive, for the Sake of Chriſt. The Infinite Merit of his Paſſion, and Death was ſufficient to out-weigh all the Guilt of the Whole World. The precious *Blood of his* Dear *Son Jeſus Chriſt* was abundantly ſufficient to *cleanſe* them, and the Whole World *from* all the Guilt of *all* their *Sins.* Nay, our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf particularly deſigned, and earneſtly deſired, that Theſe very Wretches themſelves ſhould fully partake of the Benefits of his Death; if they would but ſeek earneſtly for it; by exer-

1 John i. 7.

ciſing True *Repentance toward God*, and an humble Faith and Truſt in him. And to this End he did, even in his laſt Agony on the Croſs, pray for his Crucifiers in theſe Words; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And for this Reaſon St. *Peter*, perfectly well knowing the Mind and Diſpoſition of his Maſter, and the Nature of That Commiſſion, which he was entruſted with, plainly declares to Theſe repenting *Jews*, not only the Poſſibility, but likewiſe the infallible Certainty of their obtaining Pardon, if they would only ſeek for it in That Way, which the Bleſſed Jeſus himſelf had graciouſly appointed: That is to ſay; by *Repentance toward God*, and *Faith* in him. *Then* Peter *ſaid unto them, Repent, and be baptiſed every one of you in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.*

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Luke xxiii. 34.

Acts ii. 38.

In this Manner were all their Sins to be freely and fully pardoned for the Sake of Chriſt: And accordingly the Hiſtorian tells us, That all *They that gladly received his Word, were baptiſed: And the ſame Day there were added unto them about three thouſand Souls.*

ver. 41.

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So effectual was the earneſt Interceſſion of our kind and merciful Saviour in the Behalf of his greateſt Enemies!

Therefore if *Theſe Sinners againſt their own Souls* were freely pardoned for the Sake of Chriſt, upon their Repentance, and their Faith in him: Let no Man that ſincerely repents, and amends his Life, ever deſpair of being pardoned by God; although his Sins be never ſo many, and never ſo grievous, and never ſo long continued in. God always knows how to pardon, if we do but turn unto him with all our Hearts, and come unto him by Faith in Chriſt. Our Lord himſelf has declared as much in theſe Words,

John vi. 37. *Him that cometh to me, will I in no Wiſe caſt out.*

And to aſſure us of the Truth of This, it was, That our Lord delivered the Parable of the loſt Sheep: In the Concluſion of which

Luke xv. 7. he declares; That *Joy ſhall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt Perſons, which need no Repentance.*

And as if This were not ſufficient to encourage returning Sinners to come unto God, by Faith and Repentance; he invites them ſtill farther by the Parable of the Piece of Silver,

Silver, and assures them a Second Time, That *there is Joy in the Presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth.* SERM. XXIII. ver. 10.

But, as if a Doctrine of this Importance could never be too much inculcated, and too powerfully recommended, our Lord does, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, clearly set forth, and That in the most pathetic and affecting Manner, God's great Readiness to receive, and to pardon returning Sinners. Therein God is, under the Character of the Father, represented as melting into Compassion and Forgiveness, upon the first Discovery of his Son's Return. For, *when* the Son *was yet a great Way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him.* And even before the poor Prodigal could possibly confess his Fault, and sue for Pardon; the tender Father had already sealed it, and buried all that was past in Oblivion. And when the Son nevertheless still proceeded to confess his Fault, and express his Concern for what was past; his Father, as it were, desirous to spare him That Confusion of Face, which was unavoidable to a Person of an ingenuous Temper in his Circumstances, seems as it were unwilling even to hear his Confession: And, as if he had rather ver. 20.

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let the whole Matter paſs over in Silence. His Son was now ſenſible of his Fault, and returned to his Duty; and the good Father deſired no more. And therefore to convince his Son in the ſtrongeſt Manner, That he heartily forgave him all that was paſt, He *ſaid to his Servants*; as if he thought Nothing too good for him, and no Expreſſions and Marks of his Love, and of his Joy, upon ſuch an Occaſion, too great, and too many: *Bring forth the beſt Robe and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet. And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was loſt, and is found.*

ver. 22, 23, 24.

And if we conſider the Occaſion, upon which Theſe Parables were delivered; we ſhall be ſtill farther convinced of God's great Readineſs to pardon all returning Sinners. For the Evangeliſt tells us, That it was upon One of Thoſe Occaſions, when *the Publicans and Sinners drew near unto him for to hear him.* Upon which *the Phariſees and Scribes murmured* at him, *ſaying, This Man receiveth Sinners and eateth with them.* Upon This our Lord delivered Thoſe Three Parables above-mentioned. *They thought wickedly,*

ver. 1.

ver. 2.

Pſa. I. 2.

wickedly, That God was even ſuch an One as themſelves; intolerably rigid, ſevere, and inexorable: But our Bleſſed Saviour *reproved them, and ſet before them* the great Folly and Wickedneſs of their Judgment: By ſhewing them, That whenever *the Wicked forſakes his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and returns unto the Lord, he will have Mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him.* By This our Lord plainly ſhewed them, That *God's Thoughts were not their Thoughts, neither his Ways their Ways. For, as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, ſo were his Ways higher than their Ways, and his Thoughts, than their Thoughts.*

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Iſai. lv. 7.

ver. 8, 9.

The Prophet *Iſaiah* had foretold of the Meſſiah, That *He ſhould not bruiſe the broken Reed, nor quench the ſmoaking Flax*: But That he ſhould, on the contrary, *bind up the broken hearted*, and *comfort all that mourn*; and That he ſhould *revive the Spirit of the humble, and revive the Heart of the contrite Ones.*

xlii. 3.

lxi. 1.

ver. 2.

lvii. 15.

And accordingly our Lord gave them to underſtand, as he expreſsly declared upon another Occaſion; That he came on Purpoſe, *To ſeek, and to ſave That which was loſt.* And, in like Manner, we find in the *Acts of the*

Luke xix. 10.

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Apoſtles, That the chief Subſtance of their Preaching Every-Where, (as St. *Paul* expreſsly declares his own Doctrine to have been,) was in ſhort no more than This; namely, *Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Acts xx. 21. iii. 19, 20. xiii. 38, 39. xvii. 30. xxii. 16.

And Every-Where in the Old Teſtament, there is the greateſt Encouragement given to penitent Sinners; as appears plainly in the Caſe of *David*, of *Ahab*, of the People of *Nineveh*; but more particularly ſtill in the whole Body of the *Jewiſh* Nation: Who although they were often *led into Captivity* for their Sins; yet as often as ever they *returned again unto the Lord their God*, and ſought Him, *and obeyed his Voice, according to all that he commanded them: Then the Lord their God turned their Captivity, and had Compaſſion upon them, and returned and gathered them from all the Nations, whither the Lord their God had ſcattered them.*

Deut. xxx. 2, 3.

And again, by the Mouth of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, God does expreſsly declare; That *when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedneſs that he hath committed, and doth That which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive. Becauſe he conſidereth, and turneth away from all his Tranſgreſſions that he*

xviii. 27, 28.

he hath committed, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die. SERM. XXIII.

And as if our Gracious God could not give too great Encouragement to Repentance, and too ſtrong Aſſurances of his Readineſs to pardon; he ſays thus by the ſame Prophet: *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no Pleaſure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live.* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Neither was it under the Law only, That God diſcovered a Readineſs to forgive Thoſe upon their Repentance, who had broken his Covenant. For, although moſt of Thoſe Invitations to Repentance, which we meet with in the New Teſtament, are indeed to be underſtood of the firſt Converſion of Men to Chriſtianity: Yet it muſt be granted, That even Thoſe who had been ſo unhappy as to fall into great and crying Sins, after their Baptiſm; were ſtill invited and exhorted to repent of their Sins; and had all poſſible Encouragement given them ſo to do.

This is abundantly plain and clear from the Caſe of the inceſtuous *Corinthian*, who was *delivered unto Satan for the Deſtruction of the Fleſh, that* his *Spirit might be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus.* 1 Cor. v. 5. It appears likewiſe from the Caſe of Thoſe Other *Corinthian*

Converts, who had profaned and abuſed the Holy Ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and who are expreſsly ſaid to have been puniſhed with Sickneſs and Death Here in This World: That ſo they might be ſaved in That which is to come. *But when we are judged, we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the World.*

1 Cor. xi. 32.

This appears ſtill farther from the Meſſage ſent, by St. *John*, to the Seven Churches of *Aſia*; who are exhorted to *repent, and do the firſt Works*: And That under This expreſs Penalty of having their *Candleſticks*, that is, the Light of the Goſpel, removed from among them.

Rev. ii. 3.

It is not to be conceived, That God's Mercies ſhould be more ſtreightened, and confined, under the Goſpel, than they were under the Law of *Moſes*. But as the Chriſtian OEconomy is, from firſt to laſt, a Diſpenſation of Mercy; they muſt be rather increaſed, and enlarged. God is *the ſame Yeſterday, To-Day, and for ever*. He is *The Lord*, He *changes not*: Therefore alone it is, That we *are not conſumed* in our Iniquities: But have Time and Opportunity graciouſly afforded us, to repent of our Sins, and to return unto our Duty.

Heb. xiii. 8.

Mal. iii. 6.

And

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And accordingly the earliest Fathers of the Christian Church speak, in very high Terms, of the great Power and Efficacy of Repentance, under the Gospel.

* St. *Barnabas*, the Companion of St. *Paul's* Travels, says; That when our Blessed Saviour was about to send out Apostles, to preach the Gospel; He made Choice of Those who were wicked beyond Comparison: That so he might make it appear to all the World; That he did *not come to call the Righteous; but Sinners to Repentance.*

And St. *Clement*, Bishop of *Rome*, says thus, in † his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*. Let us look stedfastly to the Blood of Christ, and consider how precious it is in the Sight of God. For This Blood which was shed, in Order to our Salvation, has purchased

* Ὅτι δὲ ἔτως ἰδίως ἀποστόλως μέλλοντας κηρύσσειν τὸ ἐυαγγέλιον αὐτῦ ἐξελέξαλο, ὄντας ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνομωτέρους ἵνα δείξῃ, ὅτι οὐκ ἦλθε καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλὸς εἰς μετάνοιαν. *S. Barnabæ Cath. Ep.* Cap. 5. Ed. *Oxon.*

† Ἀτενίσωμεν εἰς τὸ αἷμα τῦ Χριςῦ, καὶ ἴδωμεν ὡς ἔςιν τίμιον τῷ Θεῷ αἷμα αὐτῦ, ὅ, τι, διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν ἐκχυθὲν, παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ μετανοίας χάριν ὑπήνεγκεν. Ἀτενίσωμεν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς πάσας, καὶ καταμάθωμεν ὅτι ἐν γενεᾷ καὶ γενεᾷ μετανοίας τόπον ἔδωκεν ὁ δεσπότης τοῖς βυλομένοις ἐπιςραφῆναι ἐπ' αὐτόν. Νῶε ἐκήρυξεν μετάνοιαν, καὶ ὑπακύσαντες ἐσώθησαν. Ἰωνᾶς Νινευίταις κατέςροφὴν ἐκήρυξεν· οἱ δὲ μετανοήσαντες ἐπὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασιν αὐτῶν ἱλάσαντο τὸν Θεὸν ἱκετεύσαντες, καὶ ἔλαβον σωτηρίαν, καίπερ ἀλλότριοι τῇ Θεῷ ὄντες. *S. Clementis ad Corinthios Epist.* Cap. 7. Ed. *Lond.*

the

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the Grace of Repentance for all the World. Let us look back to the Generations of Old; and we ſhall find; That in Every Age of the World, the Lord has graciouſly allowed Place for Repentance to all Thoſe that were willing to turn unto Him. *Noah* preached Repentance, and all that obeyed the Call, were ſaved. *Jonah* threatened Deſtruction to the *Ninevites*: But when they repented of their Sins, and addreſſed God, by Prayer; he was appeaſed: And although they were before Strangers to the True God, yet were they made Partakers of his Salvation.

And the ſame Holy Perſon, in his Second Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ſays thus. Let us repent, as long as we continue Here, in This World. For, we are as Clay in the Hands of the Artificer. For, as the Potter faſhions any Veſſel a-new, which happens

* Ὡς οὖν ἐσμεν ἐπὶ γῆς, μετανοήσωμεν. Πηλὸς γὰρ ἐσμεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ τεχνίτου. Ὃν τρόπον γὰρ ὁ κεραμεὺς, ἐὰν ποιῇ σκεῦος, ἢ ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ διαφθαρῇ ἢ συντριβῇ, πάλιν αὐτὸ ἀναπλάσσει· ἐὰν δὲ προφθάσῃ εἰς τὴν καμίνον τοῦ πυρὸς αὐτὸ βαλεῖν, οὐκέτι βοηθήσει αὐτῷ· οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἕως ἐσμὲν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ ἃ ἐπράξαμεν πονηρὰ, μετανοήσωμεν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας, ἵνα σωθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ἕως ἔχομεν καιρὸν μετανοίας. Μετὰ γὰρ τὸ ἐξελθεῖν ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, οὐκέτι δυνάμεθα ἐκεῖ ἐξομολογήσασθαι ἢ μετανοεῖν ἐτι. *S. Clem. ad Cor. Ep.* 2dæ. Cap. 9.

And again,

Ἕως ἔχομεν καιρὸν τοῦ ἰαθῆναι, ἐπιδῶμεν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεραπεύοντι Θεῷ, ἀπαιτοῦντες αὐτῷ ἀνάλυσιν. Ποίαν; τὸ μετανοῆσαι ἐξ ὁλοκαρδίας. *Idem Ibid.* Cap. 11.

to

to be miſ-ſhapen or broken in the Making. But never attempts to rectify any Blemiſh in it, after it is once put into the Kiln to be burned: Even ſo, and in like Manner, let us, ſo long as we are ſuffered to continue in This World, truely, and from our Hearts, repent of Thoſe Sins we have been guilty of: That ſo we may obtain Pardon of the Lord, whilſt there is Time left us for Repentance. Becauſe, after we are gone out of This World, we ſhall not be any longer able either to confeſs, or to repent of our Sins. SERM. XXIII.

And * St. *Hermas*, who is thought by Some, to have been the leaſt favourable, of any Rom. xvi. 14.

* Quos autem rejiciebant et projiciebant juxtà turrim, qui ſunt? Ait mihi, ii ſunt qui peccaverunt, et voluerunt pœnitentiam agere, propter hoc non ſunt longe projecti a turri, quoniam utiles erunt in ſtructura, ſi pœnitentiam egerint. Qui ergò pœnitentiam acturi ſunt, ſi egerint pœnitentiam, fortes erunt in fide; ſi nunc pœnitentiam egerint, dum ædificatur turris.—An iis omnibus lapidibus qui projecti ſunt, nec conveniebant in ſtructuram turris, eſt pœnitentia, et habebunt locum in turri hac? Habent, inquit, pœnitentiam; ſed in hac turri non poſſunt convenire, alio autem loco ponentur multo inferiore. *S. Hermæ Paſtor.* Lib. 1. Cap. 5. 7. Ed. *Oxon.*

And to the ſame Purpoſe he ſays elſewhere thus,

Vade, et dic omnibus, ut agant pœnitentiam, et vivent Deo; quia motus Dominus magna ſua clementia, miſit me ut pœnitentiam omnibus nunciarem, iis etiam qui non merentur propter facta ſua aſſequi ſalutem; ſed patiens erit Dominus, et invitationem factam per Filium ſuum vult conſervare.—

Quicunque

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any of the Fathers, to Repentance, for Sins committed after Baptism; does yet say some very remarkable Things, in Favour of True Repentance. For, representing the Church of Christ under the Notion of a Tower that was building; in which the Members of Christ's Church are considered as so many Spiritual Stones, of which This Building was to consist: He takes Notice of a Heap of Stones, which lay by themselves, not far off from the Building; which, he says, would be very useful for the Work; provided only that They repented sincerely, and betimes; before the Building of the Tower was compleated. Or, at least, That if they could not be admitted into This Building; They might be admitted into some other Place, far inferior to This.

And the Blessed Martyr St. *Ignatius*, Bishop of *Antioch*, * who was a Disciple of St. *John*, and † had himself seen our Blessed

Quicunque ex toto corde egerint pœnitentiam, et purificaverint se ab omni nequitia, quæ supradicta est, et non adjecerint adhuc ad delicta sua quicquam; accipient à Domino remedium priorum peccatorum suorum, si nihil dubitaverint de Mandatis meis, et vivent Deo. *Id. Ib.* Lib. 3. Cap. 11.

* ——Ἐσπινδε τὸν ἅγιον Πολύκαρπον τὸν Σμυρναίων Ἐπίσκοπον τὸν συναυξηθέντα διάσπαθεν· ἐγγόνισεν γὰρ καλὰι μαθηταὶ τὸ ἁγίω ἀποστόλω Ἰωάνν. *Martyrium S. Ignatii.* Cap. 3. Ed. *Smithi.*

† Ἐγὼ γὰρ κ᾽ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἐν σαρκὶ αὐτὸν (Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν) οἶδα. *S. Ignatii ad Smyrn. Ep.* Cap. 3.

Saviour,

Saviour, after his Reſurrection, ſays thus; * The Lord forgives all Thoſe that repent: Provided that they believe likewiſe in the Unity of the Godhead, and hold Communion with the *Biſhop*: Whom he always ſpeaks of, in all his Epiſtles, excepting That to the *Romans*, as being of an Order diſtinct from, and ſuperior to, That of the *Preſbyters*. SERM. XXIII.

And the learned *Origen*, who flouriſhed near the Middle of the Third Century, ſays; † That All Men, who, by Reaſon of their ſinful Nature, *labour, and are heavy laden* with the Burden of their Sins, are invited by the Son of God, and called to his Spiritual *Reſt*: Becauſe, God hath now *Sent his Word*, that is, his Son, *and healed them*: *And they are ſaved from their Deſtruction*. That is, They are now, by Him, delivered from the Corruption of their ſinful Nature, Pſa. cvii. 20.

* Πᾶσιν ὃν μέλανοῦσιν ἀφίει ὁ κύριος, ἐὰν μετανοήσωσιν εἰς ἑνότητα Θεοῦ, καὶ συνέδριον τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου. *S. Ign. ad Philad. Epiſt* Cap. 8.

† Πάντες ἔνοχοι ἁμαρτίας φύσει καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης πλάσεως καὶ πιφορτισμένοι καλεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀνάπαυσιν· ἐξαπέστειλε γὰρ ὁ Θεὸς τὸν Λόγον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἰάσατο αὐτούς, καὶ ἐῤῥύσατο αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῶν διαφθορῶν αὐτῶν.—Ἔτι δὲ ὅτε ἁμαρτωλὸς συνεπόρευε τῆς ἰδίας ἁμαρτίας, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ μετανοεῖν παρεύρισκε τοὺς ἡμαρτημένους ταπεινοὺς, προλαμβάνει τοῦ ἔλαττον μὴ νομιζομένου εἶναι ἁμαρτωλοῦ, ἐκ ὀφειλέτην δ' αὐτὸν ἁμαρτιῶν, ἀλλ' ἐπιφημίζει ἑαυτὸν, ὃς δοκεῖ συνέσει ἑαυτῷ κρίτλοσι, καὶ πιφυσιωμένῳ ἐν αὐτοῖς. *Origen. Contra Celſum.* Lib. 3. Ed. *Spenceri.*

and

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and from all the unhappy Effects of it. For, ſays he, when a Sinner is deeply ſenſible of his Sins, and is hereby ſtirred up to Repentance; and when he humbles himſelf for his Sins, in the Sight of God: Then is he more acceptable in God's Sight, than him who appears leſs ſinful in the Eyes of Men; and who is ſo far from looking upon himſelf, as a ſinful Perſon; That he is, on the contrary, puffed up with the vain Conceit of his own Goodneſs. And then he proceeds to confirm this Aſſertion, by the Inſtance of the proud Phariſee, and the poor Publican.

And * St. *Cyprian*, about the Middle of the ſame Century, ſays thus. When we are once gone out of This World; there is no longer any Place left for Repentance, no

* Quando iſtinc exceſſum fuerit, nullus jam pœnitentiæ locus eſt, nullus ſatisfactionis effectus: Hîc vita aut amittitur, aut tenetur; hîc ſaluti æternæ cultu Dei, et fructu fidei providetur. Nec quiſquam aut peccatis retardetur, aut annis, quo minus veniat ad conſequendam ſalutem. *In iſto adhuc mundo manenti, Pœnitentia nulla ſera eſt.* Patet ad indulgentiam Dei aditus, et quærentibus atque intelligentibus veritatem facilis acceſſus eſt. *Tu ſub ipſo licet exitu, et vitæ temporalis occaſu, pro delictis roges:* Et Deum, qui Unus et Verus eſt, confeſſione et fide agnitionis ejus implores. Venia confitenti datur; et credenti indulgentia ſalutaris de Divina pietate conceditur; *et ad Immortalitatem ſub ipſa morte tranſitur.* Hanc Gratiam Chriſtus impertit, hoc munus miſericordiæ ſuæ tribuit, ſubigendo mortem trophæo Crucis, redimendo credentem pretio ſanguinis ſui, reconciliando hominem Deo patri, *vivificando mortalem Regeneratione cæleſti.* *D. Cæc. Cypriani ad Demetrium Oratio.* Ed. *Oxon.*

Room for Humiliation, nor any Benefit from it. Here alone can Eternal Life be either ſecured, or forfeited: Here only can we provide for it, by a lively Faith, and the Fruits of it, the true Worſhip and Service of God. Nor let any one be diſcouraged, by the Heinouſneſs of his Sins, or his great Age, from endeavouring to obtain it. For True Repentance can never be too late, whilſt we continue in This World. The Door of Mercy is always open to Thoſe that ſeek it; and there is free Acceſs to all Thoſe That believe, and rely on the Truth of God's Promiſes. And although it be in the very Cloſe of Life, do you confeſs your Sins to the One only True God, and with Faith implore the Pardon of your Sins. For Pardon is always granted to him that confeſſeth his Sins, in a proper Manner; and believeth in the Promiſes of the Goſpel: Whereby you may paſs through the Gates of Death to Immortal Life. This Privilege has Chriſt purchaſed for us; and, in his great Mercy, conferred upon us; by Means of his triumphing over Death, by his Croſs: By redeeming every One that believeth on Him, with the Price of his Blood; by reconciling him thereby to God, the Father; and by renewing

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Now although it muſt be granted, That St. *Cyprian* is here ſpeaking of our Firſt Converſion to Chriſt, at our Baptiſm: Yet we may ſafely collect from hence; That True Repentance will always recommend us to God's Mercy in Chriſt; who will never caſt off any that turn to Him, with all their Hearts.

For, the ſame Holy Martyr, in his Diſcourſe concerning Thoſe, who had fallen away, in the Time of Perſecution; and renounced, and even blaſphemed their Lord and Saviour; addreſſes Thoſe very Apoſtates in Theſe very affectionate and pathetic Terms. * I beſeech you, my Brethren, to ſubmit yourſelves to Wholeſome Counſels, and to ſalutary Remedies; to join your Tears, with our Tears; and your Groans, with our Groans. We ourſelves become Supplicants to you: That ſo we may be able to ſupplicate, and entreat God, in your Be-

* Quæſo vos, fratres, acquieſcire ſalubribus remediis, conſiliis obedite melioribus; cum lachrymis noſtris veſtras lachrymas jungite, cum noſtro gemitu veſtros gemitus copulate. Rogamus vos, ut pro vobis Deum rogare poſſimus; preces ipſas ad vos prius vertimus, quibus Deum pro vobis ut miſereatur, oramus. Agite pœnitentiam plenam: Dolentis ac lamentantis animi probate mœſtitiam.

half:

half; That ſo he may have Pity on you, and pardon your Sins. We beſeech you to compleat and to perfect your Repentance; and to teſtify your Sorrow, for your paſt Sins; by ſuitable Marks and Expreſſions of Grief. And then, after giving Them ſome farther Directions for their Conduct; He gives them This Encouragement in the Concluſion of his Diſcourſe. * Whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf in This Manner, before God, for his paſt Sins; whoſoever ſhall, by his Repentance, and Shame for his Offence; and by his Grief for his Apoſtacy; be ſtirred up to a higher Pitch of Virtue, and a greater Degree of Faith: Such an One, I ſay, being now graciouſly heard by God, and ſtrengthened and aſſiſted by Him; ſhall now make the Church rejoice on his Account, which was before made ſorrowful by him: And he ſhall not only obtain Pardon for his paſt Sins; but ſhall likewiſe have a Crown of Glory.

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*——Qui ſic Deo ſatisfecerit, qui pœnitentiâ facti ſui, qui pudore Delicti, plus et virtutis et fidei de ipſo lapſus ſui dolore conceperit; exauditus et adjutus à Domino, quam contriſtaverat nuper, lætam faciet Eccleſiam: Nec jam ſolam Dei veniam merebitur, ſed coronam. *S. Cæc. Cypriani De Lapſis Orat.*

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And again, * in another Place, commenting on Theſe Words of our Saviour, in a Diſcourſe on the Virtue of Charity; *But rather give Alms of ſuch Things as you have: And behold, all Things are clean unto you:* He ſays, Our Lord meant hereby to ſhew us, by what Methods, we might be purged, and cleanſed from our Sins: Namely, by Works of Charity, and Mercy. Our merciful Lord, ſays he, teaches and adviſes us to exerciſe Charity to our Fellow-Creatures: And becauſe he is deſirous to ſave Thoſe, whom he has redeemed with the great Price of his own Blood; he teaches us how we may be cleanſed again from the Guilt of Thoſe Sins, with which we have been defiled after Baptiſm.

Luke xi. 41. Iſai. lviii. 7, 8, &c. Dan. iv. 27.

And the Chriſtian *Cicero*, *Lactantius*, who flouriſhed in the Beginning of the Fourth Century, ſays, † God deſires greatly, That all

* Porro autem monens et oſtendens unde mundi et purgati eſſe poſſimus, addidit eleemoſynas eſſe faciendas. Miſericors docet ac monet, miſericordiam fieri; et quia ſervare quærit, quos magno pretio redemit, poſt Baptiſmi gratiam ſordidatos docet denuo poſſe purgari. *Ejuſdem De Opere & Eleemoſyni Oratio.*

† Deus enim purgari homines à peccatis maxime cupit, ideoque agere pœnitentiam jubet. —— Nec tamen deficiat aliquis, aut de ſe ipſe deſperet; aut cupiditate victus, aut libidine impulſus, aut errore deceptus, aut vi coactus, ad injuſtitiæ

all Men ſhould be purified and cleanſed from their Sins: And therefore, He *commands all Men Every-Where to repent.* Let no Man, ſays he, be diſheartened, or deſpair of his Condition; when he is overcome of his Appetites, and his Luſts; when he is either captivated by *the Deceitfulneſs of Sin*, or born down by the Violence of Temptations; and in Conſequence hereof falls into Sin. Becauſe, he may ſtill be delivered from this Spiritual Bondage, and be again happily brought back to the Right Way: If he repents truely of his paſt Sins, and leads a new Life, for the Time to come; and does thereby, in ſome Sort, make Amends for the Wickedneſs of his former Life.—For, if we believe our own Children to be reformed, when we obſerve Them to

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Acts xvii. 30.

juſtitiæ viam lapſus eſt. Poteſt enim reduci, ac liberari; ſi enim pœniteat actorum, et ad meliora converſus, ſatisfaciat Deo: Quod fieri poſſe, *Cicero* non putavit; cujus hæc in Academico tertio verba ſunt: Quod ſi liceret, ut iis, qui in itinere deerraviſſent, ſic vitam deviam ſecutos corrigere errorem pœnitendo: Fælicior eſſet emendatio temeritatis. Licet plane. Nam ſi liberos noſtros, cum delictorum ſuorum cernimus pœnitere correctos eſſe arbitramur; et abdicatos, abjectoſque, rurſus tamen ſuſcipimus, fovemus, amplectimur: Cur deſperemus, Clementiam Dei Patris pœnitendo poſſe placari? Ergo idem Dominus, ac Parens indulgentiſſimus, remiſſurum ſe pœnitentibus peccata promittit, et obliteraturum omnes iniquitates, qui juſtitiam denuo cœperit operari. *L. Cælii Lactantii Firmiani De Vero Cultu.* Lib. 6. Sect. 13. 24.

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repent of their paſt Miſcarriages: And if we receive Them again to Favour; and even cheriſh and embrace Them; whom we had before caſt off, and abandoned: Why ſhould we deſpair of the Infinite Clemency and Mercy of our Heavenly Father; when we repent, and turn unto Him with all our Hearts. Becauſe, our merciful Lord, and Father, has graciouſly promiſed to forgive the Sins of all Thoſe that truely repent; and to blot out, and to forget all the Iniquities of all Thoſe, who lead a New Life, for the Time to come.

Since then it appears, both from the Law, and from the Prophets; and as well from the Old Teſtament, as from the New; and likewiſe from the Earlieſt Fathers of the Chriſtian Church: That God is always ready, and willing to pardon all ſincere Penitents; and to receive them again to Mercy, and to Favour: Let not the Number of our Sins, and the Greatneſs of our Guilt tempt any of us to deſpair of That *Mercy* of God, which *is over all his Works.* For He is *good and gracious, and of great Mercy unto all them that call upon him.* He is *full of Compaſſion and Mercy: Long-Suffering, plenteous in Goodneſs and Truth. For, look how high*

Pſa. cxlv. 9.
lxxxvi. 5.
ver. 15.
ciii. 11.

the

the Heaven is in Compariſon of the Earth: So great is his Mercy alſo toward them that fear him. SERM. XXIII.

If therefore we do but truely and ſincerely repent us of our paſt Sins, and lead a New Life for the Time to come; we have no Room to doubt of God's Readineſs to pardon, and forgive us. All the Doubt, and all the Difficulty lies on our Sides; but God is always unchangeably the ſame. Thus he ſpeaks by his Prophet *Malachi*, *I am the Lord, I change not: Therefore ye Sons of* Jacob *are not conſumed.* And again, *return unto me, and I will return unto you.* iii. 6. ver. 7. Zech. i. 3.

God is as much diſpoſed to Pardon and Forgiveneſs now, as ever He was. And if we repent ſincerely, we ſhall happily experience; That He is ſtill the ſame Merciful and Gracious God, that ever He was. 'Tis our unſpeakable Happineſs, That *He changes not*; and for This Reaſon alone it is, That we *are not* all of us *conſumed in our Iniquities*.

I ſhall conclude This Head with a very remarkable, and moſt comfortable Paſſage, out of St. *Fulgentius*, Biſhop of *Ruſpe* in *Africa*: * Who has left us an excellent Treatiſe

* Nemo deſperet Miſericordiam Dei, conſiderans atrocitatem cujuſlibet criminis: Nec tamen aliquis ſub ſpe Miſericordiæ

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Treatiſe on the Subject of Repentance. Let no One, ſays he, deſpair of the Mercy of God, when he reflects upon the Heinouſneſs of any Crime he has been guilty of: Nor yet, let any One preſume ſo far upon it, as to continue in Sin, in Hopes of it. But rather let the Confidence of him that hopes for Mercy, lead him to True Repentance; without any Doubt, or Diſtruſt of it: That ſo the Humility of the Penitent may not plunge him into Deſpair: And let him ſo love and adore the Mercy of God, as to think of his Juſtice at the ſame Time, with a becoming Awe. Let him hope, and be aſſured, That all his Sins will be forgiven upon True Repentance; but none of them pardoned, ſo long as he continues in them.

This naturally leads me in the Third and laſt Place,

III.

To conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

cordiæ Dei permaneat in Peccatis: Sed confidentia ſperantis ita ſine Dubitatione petat pœnitentiæ portum, ut humilitas pœnitentis fugiat deſperationis lethale naufragium. Et ſic Dei Miſericordiam diligat, ut ejus conſideret cum timore Juſtitiam. Totum ſibi ſperet relaxari poſſe converſo; nec dimittendum tamen aliquid exiſtimet obdurato. *S. Fulgentii Epiſcopi Ruſpenſis De Remiſſione Peccatorum.* Lib. 2. Cap. 22. *Inter opera Ed. Par.* 1684.

But

But the Preſent Time not admitting of This, I muſt beg Leave to defer it to the Next Opportunity. SERM. XXIII.

Now, To God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed, as is due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

An Earneſt Exhortation to True Repentance.

LUKE xiii. 3.

---Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

IN my former Diſcourſes on Theſe Words, I propoſed, SERM. XXIV.

I.

To ſhew the Nature of True Repentance.

II.

The great Power and Efficacy of it.

And III.

To conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

The Two Firſt of Theſe Heads I have already gone through.

And I come now in the laſt Place,

III.

To ſhut up the Whole with a ſuitable Exhortation.

And

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And here again, I ſhall obſerve with the Author laſt mentioned, * That we ought above all Things, to be firmly perſuaded; That the Lord our God is both Merciful and Juſt. From hence it will appear, To whom it is, That God forgives Sins; Where he forgives them; and When he forgives them. The Knowledge of This will hinder us from entertaining any unworthy Apprehenſions of the Divine Nature, and likewiſe from delaying our Repentance.

As the ſame Holy Perſon obſerves, † The Devil blinds ſome People ſo far, as to hinder them from attending to the Conſideration of the Divine Juſtice: By fixing their Thoughts only upon the Mercy of God: By which Means they neglect and delay their Repentance; and vainly flatter themſelves, That they ſhall obtain Remiſſion of their Sins;

* Præ omnibus itaque, nobis eſt firmâ credulitate retinendum, Miſericordem et Juſtum eſſe Dominum Deum noſtrum. Hinc enim facile poteſt inquirentibus apparere, qualibus peccata Deus dimittat, ubi dimittat, quando dimittat. Quibus cognitis, nec pravam quiſque retineat de Deo ſententiam, nec converſionem ſuam negligat. *Idem Ibidem*, Lib. 1. Cap. 6.

† Nonnullos quippe facit, abjectâ conſideratione Divinæ Juſtitiæ, ſolam Dei Miſericordiam cogitare, ut converſionem ſuam negligant; exiſtimantes ſe etiamſi uſque in finem criminoſam duxerint vitam, remiſſionis beneficio potituros eſſe. *Id. Ibid.*

although

although they continue in them, even to the End of their Lives. SERM. XXIV.

For which Reaſon, we ought to imprint carefully upon our Minds a deep Senſe of God's inflexible Juſtice, and his unſpotted Holineſs: Which will, with the Help of his Grace, effectually hinder us from preſuming ſo far upon his Mercy; as to take Occaſion from thence, to continue in our Sins. *What ſhall we ſay then? Shall we continue in Sin, That Grace may abound?* Rom. vi. 1, 2. *God forbid: How ſhall we that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein?* Therefore let us not preſume to *deſpiſe the Riches of his Goodneſs, and Forbearance, and Long-Suffering:* Becauſe, we *know*; *That the Goodneſs of God leadeth us to Repentance.* Let us not dare then, *after our Hardneſs and impenitent Hearts,* to *treaſure up unto ourſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God:* Becauſe He will moſt certainly *render to every Man, according to his Deeds.* ii. 4. ver. 5, 6.

God is Merciful indeed; wonderfully Merciful: But then He is at the ſame Time inflexibly Juſt; and tranſcendently Pure and Holy, and Good: And therefore, as God's Mercy will at all Times diſpoſe Him to par-

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don us, upon our ſincere Repentance, and Amendment of Life: Even ſo will his Juſtice and Holineſs at all Times hinder Him from pardoning our Sins, ſo long as we continue in them. Upon our Repentance, He will fully pardon all our Sins, and readily forgive us all that is paſt: But without it, He will not, and cannot poſſibly pardon us. For, as the Prophet ſpeaks, He is *of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look on Iniquity.* And Holy *David* ſays, *Thou art the God that haſt no Pleaſure in Wickedneſs: Neither ſhall any Evil dwell with Thee: Such as be fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy Sight: For Thou hateſt all them that work Vanity.* And *Moſes* ſays, *All his Ways are Judgment: A God of Truth, and without Iniquity, Juſt and Right is He.* And *Jehoſhaphat* ſays, *Let the Fear of the Lord be upon you, take Heed, and do it: For there is no Iniquity with the Lord our God, nor Reſpect of Perſons, nor Taking of Gifts.* And *Elihu* in *Job* ſays thus, *Far be it from God, That He ſhould do Wickedneſs, and from the Almighty, that He ſhould commit Iniquity. For the Work of a Man ſhall he render unto him, and cauſe every Man to find according to his Ways.* And St. *Paul* ſays expreſsly, That *we muſt all appear before the*

Hab. i. 13.

Pſa. v. 4, 5.

Deut. xxxii. 4.

2 Chron. xix. 7.

xxxiv. 10, 11.

2 Cor. v. 10.

the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt: That every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to That he hath done, whether it be good or bad. And to the ſame Purpoſe, in many other Places both of the Old and New Teſtament. SERM. XXIV.

Since then God is Juſt as well as Merciful; and for This Reaſon, cannot poſſibly pardon Sin, without ſincere Repentance and Amendment of Life: Let us not venture to put off This important Buſineſs, from Day to Day, and from Time to Time: But let us ſeriouſly, and without Delay, *turn to the Lord* with all our Hearts; That ſo He may turn unto us, and be merciful unto us; and *love us freely*, when his *Anger is turned away from us.* Hoſea xiv. 4.

And therefore, let us only conſider with ourſelves, what a terrible Riſque and Hazard we run; in ſtaving off, and delaying This neceſſary Duty. If we put off our Repentance This Year; whatever be the Reaſon of it; the ſame Reaſon will probably prevail upon us, To put it off ſtill longer, the next Year; and the Year after That; and ſo on: And the longer we live, and go on in our Sins; the more we ſhall be, every Day, wedded to them: The faſter Hold they will take

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take of us; and the leſs we ſhall be inclined, and diſpoſed, to repent of, and to forſake them.

If we put off our Repentance now, on Account of the Difficulty we find in it; This Difficulty will always remain: And inſtead of growing leſs, as we vainly hope; it will rather increaſe, and grow worſe: And if we do not purpoſe to repent, 'till ſuch Time as we find the Taſk leſs difficult; At this Rate, we ſhall never be able to repent at all: Becauſe, we ſhall always find ſome Difficulties in our Way. The World will always abound with Temptations; we ſhall always find in it the ſame Allurements, and Enticements to Sin: *For all that is in World, the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life,* will always remain in the World; and continue to tempt, to enſnare, and to deceive; after we are dead and gone. And therefore, if we ſtay 'till They have done tempting us, we ſhall never repent; becauſe They will tempt us always: We ſhall always ſee the ſame bewitching Objects before us; and if we indulge and allow ourſelves in the unlawful Purſuit and Enjoyment of them; they will always continue

1 John ii. 16.

tinue to have the ſame Aſcendant, and the ſame Power and Influence over us. SERM. XXIV.

There cannot, therefore, be a more idle Imagination, than to ſuppoſe; That we ſhall be more diſpoſed to repent hereafter, than we are at This Time. The ſame Obſtacles, and the ſame Impediments will always continue to lie in our Way; unleſs we endeavour to remove Them out of it: And the longer it is, before we ſet about it; the leſs likely we ſhall be to ſucceed in our Attempt, and the leſs able to accompliſh This great Buſineſs.

Therefore, He that delays his Repentance, till ſuch Time as he finds the Taſk leſs difficult; is like the Countryman whom * the *Roman* Satyriſt ſpeaks of: Who, when he wanted to croſs over a River, ſtood ſtill for ſome Time; in Hopes that the Waters would paſs by Him.

A great many People, who are now, to Appearance, hardened in their Sins; did, it is probable, put off This important Buſineſs from Time to Time: 'Tis likely they once promiſed themſelves, That they ſhould

* ——Qui recte vivendi prorogat horam,
Ruſticus expectat dum defluat amnis; at ille
Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.
Hor. Lib 1. Ep. 2. l. 41.

be

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be able to repent before This Time; and to live as they ought to do. But whatever They might have thought of This Matter Then; They find it as difficult to repent Now, as ever it was. Like the Country-Man above-mentioned, 'tis probable they waited, from Time to Time; till the great Floods of their Paſſions, and Temptations, paſſed by Them: But as Theſe ſtill continue to flow on, and are likely to do ſo; They are as wicked now, as ever They were, and as far off from Repentance, as before. So dangerous is it to put off the great Buſineſs of our Repentance, and to give Way to our vicious Inclinations! Such is the great Corruption and Frailty of our Nature; That we ſhall always be more or leſs inclined to cloſe in with Thoſe Temptations, which come in our Way. The ſame vicious Inclinations will always remain in us; unleſs we endeavour to check and ſubdue them, by Mortification, and True Repentance: Nay, if they are not kept under, and got the Better of, they will grow more inveterate and confirmed; till they become at laſt, through long Indulgence, invincible, and incorrigible.

How many old Wretches do we ſee in the World, who are as wicked now, as they were

were in their Youth? At leaſt they are ſo in their Inclinations; and retain as ſtrong and laſting a Liking for their Sins, as ever. Now we cannot well imagine; but That moſt of Thoſe miſerable Spectacles had once ſome Thoughts of Repentance. For it is almoſt impoſſible, That any wicked Perſons ſhould ever think of going out of This World, without repenting. And therefore Charity would incline one to believe, That Thoſe Old Offenders had at one Time, or other, ſome diſtant Thoughts of Repentance and Amendment. But the Misfortune was, That they put off this Evil Day from Time to Time; and ſhifted it off as long as they could: Till at laſt they loſt all Notions of Good and Evil, and dropped all Thoughts of the Matter. SERM. XXIV.

Well, therefore, did the Prophet ſay, *Can the* Æthiopian *change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye alſo do Good, that are accuſtomed to do Evil.* Jer. xiii. 23.

Thus it is, when Men do, by repeated Acts, and long Habits of Sin, offer Violence to their Conſciences: Till at laſt, by neglecting their Admonitions and kind Remonſtrances; They ſilence and check Thoſe friendly Monitors: Inſomuch that They be-

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come perfectly callous, and paſt Feeling; and as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, even *ſeared with a hot Iron.*

1 Tim. iv. 2.

For this Reaſon, if ever we mean to repent at all; we muſt even put on a bold Reſolution, one Time, or other: And the ſooner and the more vigorouſly we ſet about it; the more likely we ſhall be to ſucceed in our Endeavours.

And we ought likewiſe to conſider farther; That if we put off our Repentance to This Time, and the Other Time; we cannot aſſuredly depend upon living to That Time: No. Not even upon living to another Day. There is no Time like the Time preſent. We ſay ſo; and we act, as if we thought ſo; when any of the Affairs and Intereſts of This World are depending. And would to God, that we were all of us equally wiſe and prudent in the grand Concern of our Eternal Salvation! For, in an Affair of ſuch Conſequence, there is no Time to be loſt, no Room for Delay, and no Truſting to Futurity. The Time paſt is now quite out of our Power; the Time to come, may, perhaps, never be in our Power: And for this Reaſon, the preſent Moment is all that we can ſecurely depend upon. We ſee great

Numbers

Numbers of People ſuddenly cut off, every Year of our Lives: And Several of them, perhaps, when They leaſt thought of it; and were leaſt prepared for ſuch a ſudden Stroke: And, 'tis poſſible, when they were forming ſome faint Reſolutions, and entertaining ſome diſtant Thoughts of Repentance and Amendment. SERM. XXIV.

Therefore, if we ſtill continue to provoke God: If we *deſpiſe the Riches of his Goodneſs, and Forbearance, and Long-Suffering: Not knowing*, and not conſidering; *That the Goodneſs of God leadeth us to Repentance*: I ſay, If we preſume to do This; how can we tell, how ſoon This may happen to be our own dreadful Condition? Rom. ii. 4.

Let us therefore, as * St. *Ignatius* admirably well adviſes; reverence and fear *the Forbearance*

* Αἰσχυνθῶμεν, φοβηθῶμεν τὴν μακροθυμίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα μὴ ἡμῖν εἰς κρῖμα γένηται. Ἡ γὰρ τὴν μέλλουσαν ὀργὴν φοβηθῶμεν, ἢ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν χάριν ἀγαπήσωμεν· ἵν' τῶν δύο μόνον ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εὑρεθῆναι, εἰς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ζῆν. *S. Ignatii ad Epheſios Epiſtolæ* Cap. 11.

Purganda eſt igitur conſcientia; quam Deus pervidet; qui falli non poteſt. Evacuetur omni labe pectus; ut Templum Dei eſſe poſſit; quod non auri, nec eboris nitor, ſed fidei, et caſtitatis fulgor illuſtrat. Sed enim hæc omnia difficilia ſunt homini; nec patitur conditio fragilitatis, eſſe quenquam ſine macula. *Ultimum ergo remedium illud eſt; ut confugiamus ad Pœnitentiam*: Quæ non minimum locum inter virtutes habet; quia ſui correctio eſt: ut cum ſorte aut re,

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Forbearance and Long-Suffering of God: That ſo it may not prove at laſt to be to our Condemnation: Let us either fear the Wrath to come; or elſe love and embrace That Grace and Mercy, which is now offered us through Jeſus Chriſt. One or Other of Theſe Two Things we muſt do; if we would *be found of Him in Peace*, and made Partakers of Eternal Life.

1 Theſſ. i. 10.

And let us conſider farther ſtill; That Repentance is very ſeldom the Buſineſs of a Day, or a Week, or a Month: No. It is very often a Work of Time. Repentance does not conſiſt in a bare Confeſſion of our Sins, and praying for Pardon. No, my Brethren, Repentance is, as I have ſhewn you already; ſuch a deep and unfeigned Senſe and Acknowledgment of our Guilt, and ſuch a juſt and awful Apprehenſion and Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure upon This Account; as produces in us a ſincere and hearty Sorrow and Concern, for having pro-

aut verbo lapſi fuerimus, ſtatim reſipiſcamus, aut nos deliquiſſe fateamur, oremuſque à Deo veniam, quam pro ſuâ miſericordiâ non negabit; niſi perſeverabimus (perſeverantibus) in errore. *Magnum eſt Pœnitentiæ auxilium, magnum ſolatium. Illa eſt vulnerum, peccatorumque ſanatio: Illa ſpes, Illa porta ſalutis: Quam qui tollit, viam vitæ ſibi amputat: Quia nemo eſſe tam juſtus poteſt, ut nunquam ſit ei Pœnitentia neceſſaria.* Lact. Inſtit. Epit. *Ed.* Cantab.

voked

voked and offended God; and a thorough Hatred and Deteſtation of our Sins. And all This is accompanied with ſuch a ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolution of Amendment, as does, through God's Grace, working together with us; produce and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* Or, in one Word, Repentance is a thorough Change of Temper, and Diſpoſition; of Mind, and Manners; of Life, and Actions. But we all know, That This is ſuch a Change as is not to be brought about all at once. 'Tis not to be effected by a Sigh, or a Groan, or a few Tears, or a wry Face. No. It is with very great Difficulty, That we bring ourſelves to hate and abhor, to loath and deteſt Thoſe Sins, which we have loved, and doated upon, and lived in, for a great Number of Years together. Repentance is generally a Work of much Time and Difficulty. And I am ſure, of all Times, the Time of Sickneſs is the moſt unfit for This Purpoſe. Perhaps our Diſtemper may be ſo very acute and painful, as to take off our Thoughts from That, and from every Thing beſides. We may poſſibly be delirious; or elſe ſtupified, and inſenſible. The Grief and Concern of our Relations, or, it may be, SERM. XXIV.

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our Concern for them: Or elſe, perhaps, the Adjuſting and Settling our Worldly Affairs may diſtract our Thoughts, and divert our Attention from its proper Object: Whilſt the Great Account, which is to be made up between God and our own Conſciences may remain unſettled, and be left in the utmoſt Diſorder and Confuſion. Or elſe, perhaps we may be cut off all of a ſudden, without any Notice, or Warning at all. Or, it is poſſible, that That Grace of God may be denied us in our laſt Moments, which we have ſlighted, and deſpiſed, all our Lives.

What will Then become of our late, our Death-Bed Repentance? We ſhall then be forced to go out of This World, with all the Guilt of all our Sins upon our Heads; unrepented of, and unforgiven.

Good God! What a dreadful, what a heart-breaking Reflection is This? What would we not then *give in Exchange for our Souls?* How will our Conſciences then reproach and upbraid us, for abuſing the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, ſo long as we have done? How ſhould we wiſh in ſuch a Caſe, That we had in Time given a due Attention to God's Word, read publickly to us; and to Thoſe affectionate, moving Diſcourſes, which

which came to us every *Sunday*, from the Pulpit? SERM. XXIV.

Tell me now, my Brethren, is not This a deſperate Riſque for any Man in his Senſes to run? And yet, ſuch a Riſque as This, deſperate and fooliſh as it is; does every Man run, that puts off his Repentance from Day to Day, from Year to Year, and from Time to Time; till there be no more Time left.

But oh! my Brethren, let us all take effectual Care, not to be of This Number. Let us, whilſt it is ſtill *called To-day*, ſet about This great Buſineſs of our Salvation ſeriouſly, and in good Earneſt. Let us make it the great Buſineſs of our Lives, to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. Let us *ſeek the Lord while he may be found: Let us call upon Him while he is near. Let the Wicked forſake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: And let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him.* Let us, *while it is called To-day*, and before our Hearts are *hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin*, repent truely of our paſt Sins, and amend our Lives; and ſo ſhall we *find Reſt unto our Souls*.

Phil. ii. 12. Iſai. lv. 6, 7. Heb. iii. 13. Matt. xi. 29.

SERM. XXIV. Which that we may all find, may God of his Infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

The Duty of Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament: And the Preparation neceſſary to the worthy Participation thereof.

LUKE xxii. 20.

---This do in Remembrance of Me.

WHEN the Time was now come; That the Son of Man ſhould be delivered up into the Hands of wicked Men, to be crucified, and ſlain: He went up to *Jeruſalem*, as it was written of Him, *as a Lamb to the Slaughter:* Not privately, as at other Times; but publickly and openly. He was now about to accompliſh That great and ſtupendous Work; namely, the Redemption of Loſt Mankind: And being thus fully intent upon This important Enterprize; He ſays to his Diſciples: *With Deſire, I have deſired to eat This Paſſover with you, before I ſuffer.* He was about to lay down his Life for Them, and for us, and

Iſai. liii. 7.

Luke xxii. 15.

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and for all the World. And in Order that This wonderful Inſtance of his Divine Love might never be forgotten; He did, at the Concluſion of the Paſchal Supper, inſtitute the Holy Ordinance of the Bleſſed Sacrament; as a lively Repreſentation of his Paſſion, and Death: And He left it as his laſt and dying Order; That his Diſciples, and all Thoſe who ſhould come after them, ſhould, by the conſtant Uſe, and Celebration of it, keep up a perpetual Memory of his precious Death, until his Coming again. *And he took Bread, and gave Thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, ſaying, This is my Body which is given for you: This do in Remembrance of me. Likewiſe alſo the Cup after Supper, ſaying, This Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood, which is ſhed for you.*

xxii. 19, 20.

Since then our Bleſſed Saviour has commanded us all to *do This in Remembrance of* Him: That is, to receive the Holy Sacrament, in Commemoration of what he has done, and ſuffered for us: And ſince we are all of us bound in Conſcience, to obey his Command, to the beſt of our Power; I ſhall, in Treating of this Subject, reduce what I have to ſay to the following Heads.

I.

I ſhall ſhew the Duty and Obligation of Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament; and That frequently.

II.

The Preparation which is neceſſary towards the Receiving of it worthily, and as we ought to do.

III.

The Benefit and Advantage of it, when it is received in this Manner.

And, IVthly and Laſtly,

I ſhall conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

I.

I am to ſhew the Duty and Obligation of Receiving the Holy Sacrament, and That frequently.

In Order that This may more fully appear; it will be proper to conſider the End and Deſign of This Holy Inſtitution: Which was, as our Lord himſelf declared, to perpetuate, and keep up a due Senſe and Remembrance of Thoſe Great Things, which He has done for us. *This do*, ſays he, *in Remembrance of me*. As if he had ſaid, I am now about to undergo the ſevereſt Trials, which I can poſſibly be exerciſed with. You your-

SERM. XXV. yourſelves have been the conſtant Witneſſes of the inveterate Malice of my old Enemies, the Scribes and Phariſees; and of all That violent Oppoſition, which I have been forced to encounter, in the Proſecution of my Grand Deſign, of Redeeming the Whole Race of Loſt Mankind. But, whatever Difficulties I have hitherto met with; and how great ſoever my paſt Sufferings have been: Yet alas! They do not bear the leaſt Proportion to what I am now ſhortly about to ſuffer. For I muſt now, not only conflict with the relentleſs Rage of the Scribes and Phariſees; and the inſatiable Fury of a giddy and incenſed Populace: But I muſt likewiſe engage with the whole united Strength, and Force of all the Powers of Darkneſs.

But This, my Friends, is not all that I am going to ſuffer for your Sakes: For, although the Powers of Earth and Hell are now, as it were, let looſe upon me: Yet all This, great and formidable as it is; is very far from being the Whole of what I am now about to ſuffer. *I have* ſtill *a* ſeverer *Baptiſm to be baptiſed with, and how am I ſtraitned, till it be accompliſhed?* I am not only forced to fight with Men and Devils: But, as *Jacob* contended

xii. 50.

contended, and *wreſtled* with the Angel; until he obtained a Bleſſing from him; Even ſo muſt I wreſtle and ſtrive together with God, in Prayer, This Night; until I obtain Pardon and Bleſſing for all the Fallen Sons of *Adam*. I am now immediately to feel the whole Weight of my Father's dreadful Wrath and Indignation, for all the Sins of a wicked and loſt World. And although your Zeal, and Affection for me, has kept you hitherto cloſely attached to me: Yet the Time is now at Hand, when I muſt be deprived even of This Conſolation, ſmall as it is; and when I muſt be left all alone, to ſuſtain the whole Shock of God's Diſpleaſure, for the Sins of Men. You will all of you be preſently ſcattered, every one to his own Home; *like Sheep having no Shepherd*: And I ſhall then be left ſo abandoned, and deſerted; That even God himſelf will, for a While, ſeem to forſake me. I muſt then ſoon after be delivered up into the Power of mine Enemies; to be abuſed, and evil entreated; to be mocked, and ſcourged; to be crucified, and ſlain. But all This will I readily undergo, for your Sakes; and for the Sake of all Mankind: That I may thereby turn away my Father's wrathful Indignation; SERM. XXV.

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tion; That I may redeem you, and all the World, from the Guilt of your Original Corruption; and alſo from the Guilt of your own Perſonal Sins; and likewiſe from the Dominion, and the Power of them for the Time to come: And all This, in Order That I may, by This Means; *reconcile* you and all the World, *unto God*; *in one Body, by the Croſs*: That is, in my own Perſon; by dying upon the Croſs, for you all.

Eph. ii. 16.

But then, at the ſame Time that I do ſo much for you; it is highly fit and proper, That you likewiſe ſhould do Something for me: And the leaſt, ſurely, that you can poſſibly do, in Return for ſo much Love and Kindneſs to you; is to remember, and to bear in Mind what I have already ſuffered on your Behalf, and for the Sake of all Mankind; and what I am now about to ſuffer ſtill farther, for your and their Redemption, and Salvation. I do therefore now leave it, as my laſt and dying Order to you All; and to all Thoſe that ſhall come after you: That you do, by the conſtant Celebration of This Holy Sacrament; perpetuate, and keep up a continual Remembrance of my Sufferings, and Death; until the Time of my Second Coming. By *Breaking of Bread*, as ye now

ſee

ſee me do; you will, in a lively Manner, repreſent and ſet forth the Wounding and Mangling of my Body by the *Jews*: By Praying over it, and Eating of it; you will naturally be put in Mind of Thoſe Benefits, which are procured, and purchaſed for the World, by my Death: The Pouring out of the Wine will naturally remind you of my Blood; which is ſoon to be ſhed, and poured out for you, and for all the World: And the Drinking of it will ſerve to ſhew; That you are inwardly waſhed, and cleanſed by it: And your Partaking of both will be ſufficient to ſignify; That as your Bodies are ſtrengthened and refreſhed by the kindly Suſtenance of Bread and Wine: Even ſo are your Souls comforted, and ſuſtained; by the Power, and Efficacy of my Death; and by the Heavenly Influences, and the conſtant Supplies of Divine Grace; which are, for my Sake, conveyed and imparted to you, and to all Chriſtians; in the due and faithful Receiving of This Holy Sacrament. SERM. XXV.

This then was the End and Deſign, which our Saviour had in View; when He was pleaſed to inſtitute and appoint This Holy Ordinance of the Bleſſed Sacrament. It was appointed, as our Church Catechiſm excel-

SERM. XXV. lently well expreſſes it; *For the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of Chriſt, and of the Benefits, which we receive thereby.* For, as St. *Paul* has it; *As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death, till He come.*

1 Cor. xi. 26.

From the very End and Deſign of the Inſtitution therefore; and likewiſe from the Reaſon and Nature of the Thing, it plainly appears; That we are all of us under the ſtrongeſt Obligations to the frequent Participation of This Holy Ordinance. So long as we ſtand in Need of a Saviour; juſt ſo long are we bound to commemorate what That Saviour has done for us: So long as we want a faithful Mediator, to ſtand up in the Gap; juſt ſo long ought we to remember Thoſe ineſtimable Bleſſings, which are purchaſed for us, and ſecured to us; by his Paſſion, and Death; and by his continual Mediation, and Interceſſion for us, in Heaven. But how can we expect to be the better for Him; if we do not follow his Directions, and obey his Commands? Will the Merits of This Saviour, do you think, be ever applied to Thoſe Perſons, who will not be prevailed upon, to be ſaved by Him?

Or,

Or, will the deſpiſed and neglected Jeſus remember Thoſe ungrateful, diſobedient Servants of his; when they ſhall appear before Him, in his Kingdom of Glory hereafter: Who would never ſo much as vouchſafe, in his Kingdom of Grace, Here on Earth; to do ſo ſmall a Matter *in Remembrance of* Him; as to receive the Bleſſed Sacrament of his Body, and Blood; which was broken, and ſhed for their Sakes? What can ſuch a Neglect proceed from, but a Diſregard for This merciful Saviour; a Forgetfulneſs of his Love, and Compaſſion for them; a baſe Ingratitude to his Memory, and a ſhameful Diſobedience to his Commands? If *there is none Other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby they muſt be ſaved*; but the Name of Jeſus Chriſt: What will become of Thoſe Nominal Chriſtians; who can, by their Neglect, *tread under Foot the Son of God; and count the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith they are ſanctified, an unholy Thing?* Who can, with ſo much Coldneſs and Indifference, turn their Backs upon the Lord's Table: When they would Themſelves count it a Breach of Good Manners, to ſlight a Civil Invitation from a Friend, or a Neighbour? Who can obſti-

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Acts iv. 12.

Heb. x. 29.

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nately refuſe ſuch a kind and gracious Invitation, as our Bleſſed Saviour gives us all, to come and partake of This Heavenly Banquet? Who can wilfully reject, and profanely ſpurn, and flout at That merciful Offer of Pardon and Peace, which is ſo freely made to us all, in This Holy Sacrament?

If we can prevail upon ourſelves, to live in the conſtant Neglect of This Sacred Ordinance: It is a certain Sign; That we have not as yet *ſo learned Chriſt*, as we ought to do: 'Tis a plain Sign; That we are either engaged in ſuch Courſes, as are repugnant to the Genius, and Spirit of the Goſpel: That we depend too much upon the *filthy Rags* of our own *Righteouſneſs*: And That for This Reaſon, we do not ſee the Neceſſity, and the Want of a Saviour: Or elſe; That we perplex ourſelves with groundleſs Doubts and Fears about our own Unworthineſs.

As to the Firſt of Theſe; If we ſtay away from the Sacrament, on Account of our being engaged in ſinful Courſes: We ought for the ſame Reaſon, to ſtay away from Church likewiſe. There is Nothing which renders us unfit for Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament; which does not make us altogether as unfit to tread God's Courts, to appear

in

In his more immediate Preſence, and to offer up our Petitions to Him. As *Solomon* ſays; *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.* Therefore, The Sacrifice of all ſuch wicked Wretches is Every-Where, and at all Times; equally, and alike an Abomination to the Lord: Let them offer it either in Private, or in Public; in what Part of the Church, and in what Part of the Service, they will. If they are fit to join in any one Part of the Chriſtian Worſhip; They are equally fit to join in every Other Part of it. And if they are abſolutely unfit for One; they are equally and alike unfit for all. For God abhors Diſſimulation and Hypocriſy, Every-Where, and upon all Occaſions: And it is altogether as odious to Him, in the Pew, as at the Altar; when we ſay our Prayers in Private, and when we join in any One Part of the Publick Worſhip, as when we receive the Bleſſed Sacrament. And he looks as much to our Hearts, when we pronounce the *Amen*; as when we eat the *Bread*, and drink the *Wine*. Therefore, if we are only truely ſincere in our Addreſſes; we may, with an humble Confidence, go to the Sacrament: But if we are not ſincere, I am ſure we

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Prov. xv. 8.

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have no Buſineſs at Church. If we are unfit for the Former, we are equally unfit for the Latter: And if God is pleaſed to accept us in the One; he will never reject us in the Other.

If, on the other Hand, we preſume upon our own Righteouſneſs; then there is no Occaſion at all to come to Church: We have no Need to aſk Pardon for our Sins, nor Grace to aſſiſt us in our Endeavours. But This is ſo far from being the Caſe; That our Saviour tells us, we are at beſt but *unprofitable Servants*: And St. *John*, That *If we ſay, that we have no Sin, we deceive ourſelves, and the Truth is not in us.* We all know, That we might all of us be much better than we are; and after all our Care, 'tis a great Mercy, if we are accepted at laſt: For we might certainly be much more exact and upright than we are: And if God ſhould require the utmoſt Poſſibility of Goodneſs at our Hands; it would be no more than what He might juſtly expect from us. And therefore, after all our Diligence; we ſtand in Need of all the Allowances which Infinite Goodneſs can poſſibly make for our Weakneſs and Infirmity. But how far are the very beſt of us, from *Doing all that is commanded*

1 Ep. i. 8.

manded us? How many Slips and Miſcar- SERM. XXV.
riages, how many Failures and Omiſſions, how many vain Thoughts, and fooliſh, irregular Deſires, have we all to anſwer for? If God were to *enter* into ſtrict *Judgment* with us; *no Man living* would *be juſtified in his Sight*. For, as Holy *Job* ſpeaks, *He chargeth his Angels with Folly: Yea, the Heavens are not clean in his Sight*. No Man ever yet did, or will *fulfill all Righteouſneſs*, but our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. iv. 18. xv. 15.

If therefore, when we have done our beſt; we are only *unprofitable Servants*; and if we are all of us very far from Doing all that God might, with ſtrict Juſtice, require of us: Then tell me, all you that call yourſelves, and affect to be thought by Others, good Moral Men; Whether you do not want a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Mediator, an Advocate? One, that may ſtand up in the Gap, between God, and you? One, that may turn away his fierce Anger, and ſcreen you from the dreadful Effects of his wrathful Indignation? One, that may, by his own Merits, ſupply the Deficiency of your imperfect Services? One, that may interceed with God to pardon, and forgive your manifold Sins and Offences? One, that

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may pour down on you the Bleſſed Influences of the Holy Ghoſt; to aſſiſt and enable you, to diſcharge your Duty, for the Time to come? If then, you do want ſuch a Saviour; you muſt carefully, and conſcientiouſly obey all That Saviour's Commands; before you can poſſibly be ſaved by Him: And as He has commanded and ſtrictly enjoined you, to receive the Bleſſed Sacrament of his Body and Blood; you muſt, without any longer Delay, ſhew your Gratitude to his Memory, and your Obedience to his Command, by *Doing This in Remembrance of* Him.

But if we forbear Coming to the Sacrament, out of an Apprehenſion of our own Unworthineſs; Then it ſhould be conſidered, That the Goſpel always leaves Place for Reconciliation with God, upon True Repentance, and Amendment of Life. Nothing can make us unworthy to receive the Holy Sacrament; but our reſolving to continue ſtill, to be unworthy. If we repent ſincerely of our paſt Sins, and ſtedfaſtly reſolve, to lead a New Life, for the Time to come; then we may ſafely go to the Sacrament. For, the Bleſſed Jeſus *came not, to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* The

Matt. ix 13.

Fountain of his Blood was purpoſely *opened*, to waſh away, and cleanſe the Guilt of Thoſe *Sins*, and That *Uncleanneſs*; which is ſincerely repented of, and forſaken. Therefore, if we are truely ſincere; and if we ſeriouſly and earneſtly deſire to ſerve God, to the beſt of our Power; we need not forbear Going to the Sacrament, out of an Apprehenſion of our Unworthineſs: Becauſe, This Senſe of our Unworthineſs, together with a ſerious and ſincere Deſire of Being better, and Doing better; and an humble and thankful Remembrance of Chriſt's Death, and a lively Faith in God's Mercies, through Him, and Love and Charity for all the World, are the beſt Qualifications, which we can poſſibly bring with us to the Holy Sacrament. SERM. XXV. Zech. xiii. 1.

Upon the Whole then, No ſufficient Excuſe can be alledged, for Neglecting to receive the Bleſſed Sacrament: And, if Nothing will juſtify us, in abſenting from it; then, the plain Conſequence is; That we ought to receive it, and That frequently. And ſurely, If we conſider the great and wonderful Love of our Bleſſed Saviour, in Dying for us; we ſhall be abundantly convinced of the Obligations we are under, to *do This in Remembrance of* Him. Such a

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ſurprizing Degree of Love and Affection, as the Son of God has ſhewn for us ſinful Men, calls aloud for our moſt grateful Acknowledgments. Such wonderful Kindneſs certainly requires ſome ſmall Returns on our Parts. But, to ſay the Truth, what Returns can ſuch frail, indigent Creatures, as we are make for ſuch an aſtoniſhing Inſtance of the Divine Love? None indeed ſuitable to the Greatneſs of our Bleſſed Saviour's Love and Compaſſion for us: But ſtill we ought to do as much as we can: Every Thing that lies in our Power. We ought to give ſome Marks, at leaſt, of our Gratitude: We ought to catch at every Opportunity of Shewing our Inclinations, and our Readineſs to acknowledge his Goodneſs to us. This, ſurely, is the leaſt that we can do; and This ſmall Acknowledgment, inconſiderable as it is, is all that God requires of us. Almoſt every Man that breaths, let him be never ſo poor, has a Heart, and a Tongue; and if his Heart be grateful, and his Tongue thankful; This is all that God deſires. *My Son, give me thy Heart*, ſays *Solomon*. And *Iſaiah* tells us; That God looketh to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at his Word. We have it therefore

Prov. xxiii. 26.

Ixvi. 2.

therefore in our Power, the pooreſt and meaneſt of us all, to ſhew our Thankfulneſs for God's Mercies: And if we are backward in doing This, we are utterly inexcuſable. Our Happineſs in This Life, and our Salvation in the Next, depend, in a very great Meaſure, upon the faithful Diſcharge of This Duty. 'Tis the Command of our Saviour; That we ſhould *Do This in Remembrance of* Him: And if we preſume to neglect it; we cannot poſſibly be ſaved, according to the Terms of the Goſpel. *There is no Salvation in any Other*: There is no Entrance into Heaven, but through Him: And therefore, Thoſe that will not enter in through Him, cannot enter in at all. Our Lord himſelf has told us, That He is *The Door of the Sheep*: And then He repeats it, with an Addition; *I am the Door*, ſays he, *by Me, if any Man enter in, he ſhall be ſaved, and ſhall go in and out, and find Paſture.* SERM. XXV. John x. 7. ver. 9.

Obſerve here, that our Saviour ſays; *If any Man enter in by Me, he ſhall be ſaved*: Obſerve This, I ſay, and mark it well too. For This is as much as to ſay; That none ſhall *be ſaved*, who will not *enter in by Him*. *Conſider this*, I beſeech you, *ye that forget God*, Pſa. l. 22.

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God, and your Saviour; left They *pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.* For indeed, who ſhould deliver you, if your Saviour will not? There is no Other Saviour, no Other Chriſt, but the crucified Jeſus. As St. *Paul* ſays, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, Who gave himſelf a Ranſom for all.* But before this Ranſom will actually and finally redeem us from the Penalty of Sin, and the Wrath of God; we muſt be obedient to the Commands of our Heavenly Saviour: And as he has enjoined us to receive the Bleſſed Sacrament, *in Remembrance* of his Paſſion, and Death; let us not preſume to live in the open and conſtant Neglect of it. For, if we dare to diſobey his Command, we cannot poſſibly be ſaved by Him: And, as I ſaid before, there is no One elſe that can ſave us. In Order then that we may all of us receive it worthily, and as we ought to do; give me Leave in the Second Place,

1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

II.

To ſhew briefly, what is That Preparation, which is neceſſary towards Receiving the Sacrament worthily, and as we ought to do. And

And to This End, I ſhall think it ſufficient, to enlarge a little upon the concluding Clauſe of our Church Catechiſm. This tells us; That in Order hereunto, we muſt examine ourſelves, Whether we repent ourſelves truely of our former Sins; Whether we ſtedfaſtly purpoſe to lead a New Life; Whether we have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Chriſt; Whether we have a thankful Remembrance of his Death; and Whether we are in Charity with all Men. Of each of Theſe, a little in particular. SERM. XXV.

And Firſt, we muſt examine ourſelves, Whether we repent ourſelves truely of our former Sins. This is, if we conſider it, abſolutely neceſſary to the worthy Participation of the Lord's Supper. For, indeed, if we do not ſincerely repent; What ſhould we go there for? So long as we continue in a State of Impenitence; we have Nothing to do with God, nor God with us; unleſs it be to puniſh us. The *Fountain* of our Saviour's Blood was, it muſt be owned, opened for *Uncleanneſs*: But not ſuch *Uncleanneſs* as is cheriſhed, and foſtered; and wilfully, and obſtinately continued in. It is not the hardened Sinner, but the returning Sinner, that is the Object of his Compaſſion and Care.

It

SERM. XXV. It is not the malicious, incorrigible Offender; but Thoſe who *labour, and are heavy laden* with the Burden of their Sins, that are promiſed Pardon and Reſt unto their Souls. If then we don't truely repent of our former Sins, it is a monſtrous Preſumption to go to the Sacrament, and ſo it is likewiſe to come to Church: Becauſe This is, in Effect, to mock God; to come into his more immediate Preſence, all defiled and polluted; when we are moſt unfit to appear before Him: And, To aſk his Pardon; and to beg his Bleſſing; at the ſame Time that we live, and reſolve to live in open Rebellion againſt Him.

If therefore we would be accepted, in the Sacrament, we muſt draw near with unfeigned Reverence, and approach it with Awe; we muſt repent truely of our paſt Sins, and ſtedfaſtly purpoſe to lead a New Life; which is the Second Article of Enquiry, in our Preparation for it. If we are not firmly reſolved to lead a New Life, This is a Sign that we have not truely repented; that we are ſtill in our Sins. And therefore, without ſuch a ſtedfaſt Reſolution, we are not fit for the Sacrament, and cannot reap any Benefit from it. The Deſign of our Saviour's

our's Coming was; To *redeem us from all* SERM.
Iniquity; and to *purify unto himſelf a peculiar* XXV.
People zealous of good Works. Unleſs then Tit. ii. 14.
we reſolve firmly to be good for the Future; we may as well, and better ſtay away: For, to go to the Sacrament, and to reſolve upon Going on in our former Sins; would be only to mock God, and to increaſe the Meaſure of our Guilt. For which Reaſon, we ſhould examine our Hearts ſtrictly and impartially; That ſo we may know, Whether we are truely ſincere, and in good Earneſt; or not.

Next we are to enquire, Whether we have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Chriſt. This is the very Foundation and Ground-Work of all. 'Tis This that puts us upon Exerting our utmoſt Endeavours: For, of ourſelves, we can do Nothing; we are Nothing; and our beſt Services would go for Nothing; unleſs the Deficiency of them were abundantly ſupplied by the precious Merits of our Bleſſed Saviour's Paſſion and Death. We could not preſume to go to the Lord's Table, Truſting in our own Righteouſneſs: But Relying upon God's manifold and great Mercies, *We have* Eph. iii.
Boldneſs and Acceſs with Confidence, by the 12.
Faith of Chriſt. For his Sake, we hope to have our imperfect Services graciouſly accepted

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cepted by God: Becauſe, *Being juſtified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Rom. v. 1.

And not only This; but we muſt examine ourſelves farther, Whether we have a thankful Remembrance of our Saviour's Death. Becauſe, the very End and Deſign of the Sacrament was to promote, and to perpetuate a due Senſe, and a grateful Remembrance of it. *Do This*, ſays our Lord, *in Remembrance of me.* Therefore, it muſt be ſuch a devout affectionate Remembrance of it, as fills our Hearts with Love and Gratitude. It is not ſufficient to remember only; That there was once ſuch a Perſon as Jeſus Chriſt; and That He died for us. We muſt not think of Him, and his Death, in ſuch a cold, lifeleſs Manner: But we muſt conſider, what a terrible, deſperate Condition we ſhould have been in, if Chriſt had not died to ſave us; and This Reflexion ſhould inſpire us with the warmeſt and moſt affectionate Senſe of This wonderful Deliverance: This ſhould imprint upon our Minds a ſettled and laſting Hatred of Sin; ſince it was ſo odious in the Sight of God, as to require ſo coſtly a Sacrifice to expiate, and attone for it: And the Conſideration of This

Deliverance

Deliverance ſhould bind us in the ſtrongeſt Manner to our Gracious Redeemer. It ſhould create in us the greateſt Love, and the moſt ardent Affection for Him. It ſhould teach us to think Nothing too much to do for Him, who has been pleaſed to do ſo much, and ſuch great Things for us. SERM. XXV.

And as we have not an Opportunity of ſhewing our Love to Him, and our Gratitude to his Memory, as much as his Goodneſs to us deſerves; we muſt love our Brethren for his Sake; and be in Charity with all Men.

This is the laſt Article of Enquiry in our preparatory Examination before the Sacrament. If our Hearts tell us, that we are; then we are, thus far at leaſt, qualified as we ſhould be. But if we are not; although we have already *brought our Gift to the Altar*; yet if we remember that our *Brother hath Ought againſt us:* We muſt *leave there our Gift* before the Altar, *and go our Way, Firſt be reconciled to our Brother, and then come, and offer our Gift.* For God prefers Mercy before Sacrifice; and our Saviour ſays, *If we forgive not Men their Treſpaſſes, neither will our Father forgive our Treſpaſſes.* Matt. vi. 15.

To

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To conclude therefore; If we repent us truely of our former Sins; If we ſtedfaſtly purpoſe to lead a New Life; If we have a lively Faith in God's Mercy, through Chriſt; If we have a thankful Remembrance of his Death; And, if we are in Charity with all Men, This is the True Wedding Garment; and if we have This on; we ſhall be fit Gueſts for That Heavenly Banquet, the Holy Sacrament; and This brings me in the Third Place,

III.

To ſhew the Benefit and Advantage of Receiving the Sacrament; when it is received with ſuch a Preparation, and Diſpoſition of Mind.

But not having Time for This at preſent, I muſt beg Leave to defer it to the next Opportunity.

Now, To God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghoſt; be aſcribed, as is due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and ever-more. Amen.

The

The Benefits and Advantages of the worthy Receiving of the Bleſſed Sacrament: And an Exhortation thereunto.

LUKE xxii. 20.

---This do in Remembrance of Me.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe on Theſe Words, I propoſed, in Treating of them, to obſerve the following Method. SERM. XXVI.

I.

To ſhew the Duty, and Obligation of Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament, and That frequently.

II.

The Preparation which is neceſſary towards the Receiving of it worthily, and as we ought to do.

III.

The Benefits, and Advantages of it, when it is received in This Manner.

And,

IV.

To conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation.

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The Two Firſt of Theſe Heads I have already gone through.

And I come now, in the Third Place, to ſhew,

III.

What are the Benefits and Advantages of Receiving the Holy Sacrament, when it is received with Thoſe Qualifications before-mentioned.

The Benefits and Advantages, which ariſe from the due Performance of This Duty, are of Two Sorts: They are either ſuch as naturally flow from it; or elſe, ſuch as are always annexed to it. As to the Firſt, if we frequently receive the Bleſſed Sacrament, and That with a becoming Devotion; it will greatly contribute to ſtrengthen, and confirm us in our Chriſtian Courſe. The very Preparation for it will be a Means to preſerve us from Sin, and to ſpur us on to our Duty. For, ſo long as we look back upon our paſt Miſcarriages, with Grief, and Sorrow; with Hatred, and Indignation; we ſhall be leſs likely to return unto them again: So long as we keep in Mind our good Reſolutions of Obedience, and Amendment of Life; we ſhall be more likely to watch, and to guard againſt our ſeveral Failings; to obſerve, and

to

to check every Motion, and every Tendency towards them; and to avoid all Thoſe Occaſions which lead unto them: So long as we are duely and deeply ſenſible of our own Unworthineſs; we ſhall be more convinced of the Neceſſity we are under, of Relying intirely upon the Merits of our Bleſſed Saviour, and imploring the Aſſiſtances of his Divine Grace: So long as we are devoutly thankful, for God's Mercy in Chriſt; and have a grateful and affectionate Remembrance of his Death; we ſhall be naturally diſpoſed to make all the Returns we poſſibly can, for ſo great a Bleſſing: We ſhall be ſtrongly inclined to give every poſſible Mark of our Thankfulneſs: We ſhall think Nothing too much to do, and Nothing too much to ſuffer, for ſuch a Kind and Merciful Saviour: And we ſhall think ourſelves bound in the ſtrongeſt Manner, to reſpect his Memory, to revere his Authority, and to obey his Commands. SERM. XXVI

If again, we are in Charity with all Men; if we love as Brethren, and live together as Children of the ſame Father; This is one very conſiderable Part of our Chriſtian Duty: And the ſame Principles, that help to carry us thus far; will, it is to be hoped; have a

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proportionable Influence upon every other Part of our Behaviour. So that upon the Whole we ſee; If we receive the Bleſſed Sacrament in a worthy, becoming Manner; That is, with Thoſe preparatory Diſpoſitions of Mind before-mentioned; it will naturally contribute to make us good Men, and good Chriſtians. Theſe are the Benefits and Advantages, which naturally ariſe from the due Performance of This important Duty. And beſide Theſe, there are Others, which God has, in his great Mercy, annexed to the faithful Diſcharge of it.

The Advantages of this latter Sort are, 1. The Pardon of our paſt Sins. 2. Grace to reſtrain, and preſerve us from them; for the Future. And 3dly, The Conſequences of Both; which are, Peace of Mind in This Life; and the well-grounded Hopes of everlaſting Happineſs in the Next.

1. And Firſt, In the Due Receiving of This Holy Sacrament, we do aſſuredly obtain the Pardon and Remiſſion of our paſt Sins.

This Holy Ordinance is, as it were, a Sort of Supplement to Baptiſm: And without This, Baptiſm would, in moſt Caſes, be ineffectual to our Salvation. And the Reaſon

Reaſon of This is very plain: For, although Baptiſm does, in Virtue of our Saviour's Promiſe, and for the Sake of his Merits, thereby transferred, and made over to us; put us in a State of Grace and Favour with God: I ſay, notwithſtanding that we are by This Means admitted into Covenant with God; Yet are we intitled to the Benefits of This Covenant, only upon Condition of ſincere and univerſal Obedience, for the Time to come. Any one ſingle deliberate Act of Sin is enough to make us forfeit our Title; and to cut us off from all the Benefits of This Covenant. Hereby we break the Covenant, and diveſt ourſelves, as it were, of our former Right. And God knows, we are all of us too apt to do ſuch Things as are ſufficient to make This Covenant void; and to cancel the Agreement which before ſubſiſted between God and us. SERM. XXVI.

If indeed after Baptiſm we were made impeccable: That is, if we were ſecured from ever falling into Sin after it: Then, the Covenant would remain in Force; and all the Benefits of it would be enſured to us, beyond all Poſſibility of forfeiting, or loſing them: But This is far, very far from being the Caſe with any of us. What therefore

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must be done in this Caſe? When we have wilfully broken the Covenant, and deprived ourſelves of all the Privileges belonging to it: How ſhall we renew it, or what ſhall we do, to get into Covenant again with God? We cannot be baptiſed a Second Time. This Holy Ordinance of Baptiſm is not to be repeated. What then muſt be done in this Caſe? Why, This muſt be done. We muſt have Recourſe to the Supplemental Part of Baptiſm, the Holy Sacrament of Chriſt's Body and Blood. We muſt come to This *Fountain*, which was *opened for Uncleanneſs*; and here waſh, and be clean: We muſt, with ſincere Repentance, and an humble Faith in the precious Merits of his Paſſion, and Death; *ſo eat the Fleſh of our dear Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and drink his Blood; That our ſinful Bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our Souls waſhed through his moſt precious Blood.*

In this Holy Sacrament, the officiating Miniſter does ſhew, and ſet forth to God the Father, the Sufferings and Death of his Only-Begotten Son: He begs Leave moſt humbly to remonſtrate to Him, That our Saviour's Sufferings, and Death, were all of them undergone, for the Sake of ſuch *heavy laden*,

laden, and returning Sinners, as we are: He begs, therefore, That God would graciouſly pardon our Weakneſs, and pity our Blindneſs: And as He, in his great Wiſdom, beſt *knows whereof we are made*; and, out of his abundant Mercy graciouſly *remembreth that we are but Duſt*: The Miniſter implores and beſeeches Him, in the moſt humble, and earneſt Manner; To overlook all our paſt Faults; To caſt all our Offences behind Him; to accept our Sacrifice of Praiſe, and Thankſgiving; and To grant, *That by the Merits and Death of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and through Faith in his Blood; we and all the whole Church may obtain Remiſſion of our Sins, and all other Benefits of his Paſſion.* SERM. XXVI.

This, my Brethren, is what the officiating Miniſter does, in our Behalf, and what we ought to join with him in Doing, when we receive the Bleſſed Sacrament. And, as God *deſireth not the Death of a Sinner*; but rather, that he ſhould return and live; He graciouſly looks upon us, in his Son Jeſus Chriſt; and for his Sake: And when He looks upon us in this endearing Light; and beholds us with all the Tenderneſs and Pity, with all the Love and Affection of a kind and good Parent, He graciouſly over-

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looks all our paſt Faults and Miſcarriages He receives Us returning Prodigals with the Arms of his Mercy; and our Sins and Offences remembers no more. In this Manner, is the great Charter of Baptiſm reſtored and confirmed; thus is the returning Sinner re-inſtated in all his former Privileges; and thus is he again intitled to all Thoſe Benefits of Chriſt's Death, which he had, by the wilful Breach of his Baptiſmal Vow, unhappily forfeited and loſt. And this naturally leads me to the Second Benefit annexed to the due Celebration of This holy Ordinance, which is,

2. The Help and Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Bread and Wine are, as our Church Catechiſm admirably well expreſſes it, no more than an *outward and viſible Sign of an inward and ſpiritual Grace*: And This Sign was *ordained by Chriſt himſelf as a Means whereby we receive the ſame, and a Pledge to aſſure us thereof.* What our daily Food is to our Bodies; That the Grace of God is to our Souls: As That contributes, and helps to increaſe our Bulk and Stature; and to repair the Decays of our weak Nature; ſo does This contribute, and help to make us grow

in

in Virtue and Godlineſs; To proceed from one Degree of Goodneſs to the other; 'till ſuch Time as we come to *a perfect Man, to the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt.* *For whoſoever hath, to him,* ſays our Saviour, *ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more Abundance.* If then we receive the Sacrament in the Manner that we ought to do; we ſhall not only obtain the Pardon of our paſt Sins; but alſo find Grace to help in the Time of Need, in the Hour of Temptation. But to conclude this Head,

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Matt. xiii. 12.

3. The laſt Benefits which ariſe from the due Performance of This Duty, are Peace of Mind in This Life, and the well-grounded Hopes of Eternal Happineſs in the Next; which will be the certain Conſequence of our worthy Receiving, if we only perſevere, and hold out to the End.

We ſhall aſſuredly reap, if we faint not; provided only that our *Patience have her perfect Work, that ſo we may be perfect and intire, wanting Nothing.* For, as St. *James* ſays, *Bleſſed is the Man that endureth Temptation: For when he is tried he ſhall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.* And Nothing can more contribute to ſupport us under Temptation,

James i. 4.

i. 12.

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Temptation, and to preſerve us from Falling, than the devout and frequent Receiving of the Bleſſed Sacrament. And This brings me to the Fourth and laſt Thing, which is,

IV.

To conclude all with a ſuitable Exhortation. After all that I have already ſaid upon this Subject; one ſhould think, that I need to ſay Nothing more, to convince People of the Neceſſity of Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament; and to perſuade them to the due and faithful Diſcharge of This important Duty. But however it comes to paſs, ſo it is, that there are very many, who, in all other Things, keep up the Appearance of a Religious Behaviour; but in this Reſpect are utterly inexcuſable. I ſay, the Appearance of a Religious Behaviour; for, after all, 'tis really no more than an Appearance. If ſuch Perſons were truely ſincere, and in good Earneſt; They would never dare to neglect the Sacrament, as they do. If they really believed the Being of a God; If they were heartily convinced of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion; If they only conſidered, That they have Souls to take Care of, as well as Bodies; If they were but duely ſenſible of their own Unworthineſs, to appear in God's

God's Preſence: And, If they are not deeply and heartily ſenſible of it, I am ſure This is no great Mark either of their Wiſdom, or of their Goodneſs: I ſay, If they were but duely ſenſible of their own Unworthineſs, they would think themſelves infinitely happy; That They had a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Mediator and an Advocate, To ſtand up between them and God, as it were; To ſcreen them from the Anger of an offended Deity; To interceed in their Behalf; To plead their Cauſe, and to ſollicit and procure their Pardon. If they were but ſenſible how much they wanted and ſtood in Need of ſuch a Merciful Saviour; They would no longer dare to affront and provoke This their gracious Deliverer; by Deſpiſing his Authority, and Diſobeying his Command. *If the Word ſpoken by Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every Tranſgreſſion and Diſobedience received a juſt Recompence of Reward. How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation.* Or, as it is in the Tenth Chapter of this Epiſtle; *If he that deſpiſed* Moſes's *Law, died without Mercy; of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God; and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant,*

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Heb. ii. 2, 3.

Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy Thing?

Give me Leave therefore, to ſpeak, now with great Plainneſs of Speech, unto all of you that have hitherto neglected this Sacred Ordinance; and To all you, likewiſe, that ſeldom or never repair to it. For ſurely, next to the not Receiving at all; is the monſtrous Careleſſneſs of too many People who very ſeldom receive the Bleſſed Sacrament. Tell me then, what is it that you come to Church for? Is it out of Cuſtom? Is it only to ſee, and be ſeen? Is it only to make Remarks? Is it only to paſs away an idle Hour, that lies heavy upon your Hands? Is it only to ſatisfy your Curioſity, in Hearing This, or That Preacher? Or elſe, is it only to promote your Temporal Intereſts, by keeping up a Form of Godlineſs, without the Power of it? It is indeed to be feared, That ſome one, or other, of theſe Reaſons brings a great many People to Church, who would not come to it otherwiſe. But ſtill I flatter myſelf; that This is the Caſe of very few of Thoſe, that now hear me. And therefore tell me, I pray you, what did you come to Church To-Day for? Did you come out of a Principle of Duty, and Conſcience?

ſcience? Was it to profeſs and declare your Dependence upon God, your Belief of his Promiſes, and your Faith in the Merits of your Crucified Saviour? Was it to obtain the Pardon of your paſt Sins, and the Grace of God, to help and aſſiſt you, in the Time of Need? I ſay, were Theſe the True Reaſons of your Coming to Church This Day? Charity inclines me to think they were. And I truſt in God, your own Conſciences will tell you, That Theſe were the True Reaſons of your Aſſembling yourſelves together To-Day, in This Place. But then at the ſame Time, tell me again; If Theſe Reaſons did really bring you to Church; What is the Reaſon, why you will not likewiſe receive the Bleſſed Sacrament? Is it, becauſe you think that you are not fit for it? If This be the Caſe; then Why are you not fit for it? Nothing but a Want of Sincerity can make you unfit for it. If you are fit, to join in the Prayers of the Church; then are you likewiſe fit to receive the Sacrament. Whoever is fit for the one; is likewiſe fit for the other: And Nothing can make you unfit for the Sacrament, which does not likewiſe make you equally unfit for the other. If you have dealt ſincerely with

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God, This Day; when you joined in the Prayers of our Excellent Church; then you may ſafely go to the Sacrament. If you repent truely of your paſt Sins; if you ſtedfaſtly reſolve to lead a New Life, for the Time to come; if you have a firm Faith, and Confidence, in the Merits of our Bleſſed Saviour, and are diſpoſed to ſhew your Thankfulneſs for his Mercies to you; and are in Charity with all Men; then are you as fit, and as worthy to receive the Sacrament, as a weak imperfect Man can poſſibly be.

But, If you do not repent ſincerely; If you do not ſtedfaſtly reſolve to amend your Lives; If you are not ſenſible of your own Unworthineſs, and have not a firm Faith in the Merits of Chriſt's Death; If you are not truely thankful for all his Mercies; and *are not* in Charity with your Neighbours: What in the Name of God, have you been Doing for this Hour together? Have you been Mocking God? Have you been Affronting and Inſulting your Saviour, and Impoſing upon your Neighbours, and yourſelves too? I hope, and truſt in God, you have not. If you are not ſincere, then you are not fit to come to Church, nor to ſay ſo much as the Lord's Prayer: But if you are truely ſincere,

and in good Earneſt, then you may ſafely go to the Sacrament. SERM. XXVI.

Let me entreat and conjure you therefore; not to neglect Receiving the Holy Sacrament any longer. He that ſlights and diſobeys the Command of his Saviour, his Dying Saviour; will not, and cannot poſſibly be ſaved by Him. If you wilfully diſobey one Command of His, you will be as certainly puniſhed, as if you had diſobeyed all. *For whoſoever ſhall break one of the leaſt of his Commandments, ſhall be called leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matt. v. 19.

I beſeech you therefore, *as an Ambaſſador, in Chriſt's Stead*; come to This Holy Sacrament: And *do This* ſo ſmall a Thing, *in Remembrance of* Him, who has done ſo much, and ſuch great Things for you. Don't think to excuſe yourſelves any longer, by any idle, ſilly Pretences. What I have ſaid, is enough to ſhew the wretched Folly of all ſuch Excuſes. You cannot plead Ignorance, or Prejudice in This Matter: And therefore, if you diſregard, and reject what I now ſay to you all, in the Name of God, and the Bleſſed Jeſus: You will, by ſo Doing, diſregard and *reject the Counſel and Commandment of God* your Saviour. And the dreadful Conſequence of Both will be; 2 Cor. v. 20.

That

SERM. XXVI. That He will finally and for ever reject you; When He ſhall come *in the Glory of his Father, with his Holy Angels*; to take Vengeance upon all Thoſe, that have not known Him, Here in this World; and *have not called upon his Name*, as they ought to do. But that This may never be the Caſe of any one Perſon here preſent; May God of his Infinite Mercy grant, for the Sake of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt; Three Perſons, and One God; be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Praiſe, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever-more. Amen.

F I N I S.

A DISCOURSE OF FREE-THINKING,

Occasion'd by

The Rise and Growth of a Sect call'd FREE-THINKERS.

Mundum tradidit *hominum* disputationi *Deus*. *Eccl.* 3. 11. Vulg.

Unusquisque suo sensu abundet. *Rom.* 14. 5. Ib.

Nil tam temerarium, tamque indignum sapientis gravitate atque constantiâ, quam, quod non satis explorate perceptum sit & cognitum sine ulla dubitatione defendere. *Cic. de Nat. Deor. l.* 1.

'Tis a hard Matter for a Government *to settle Wit.*
Characteristicks, *vol.* 1. *p.* 19.

Fain would they confound Licentiousness in Morals *with* Liberty in Thought, *and make* the Libertine *resemble his* direct Opposite.
Ib. *vol.* 3. *p.* 306.

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